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THE
FAMILY BAPTIST;

OR,

A TREATISE

ON THE

SUBJECTS, MODE, AND MORAL DESIGNS

OF

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM,

IN RELATION TO

INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, CHURCHES AND MISSIONS.

BY GEORGE NEWBURY,

Burnham, Bucks.

A FAMILY BAPTIST AND INDEPENDENT MINISTER.

“And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Gen. xii. 3.

“And I baptized also the household (family) of Stephanas.”

1 Cor. i. 16.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,

AND SOLD BY KELLY & SON, HOUNDSDITCH.

SOLD ALSO, BY WESTLEY AND DAVIS, STATIONERS' COURT; HOLDS-
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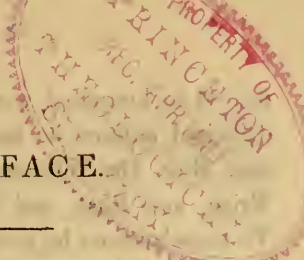
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PREFACE.

THE author of the following treatise, has for many years felt a conviction, that the subject of Christian baptism had not been exhibited in that united point of view, in relation to families, to churches, and to missions, which its importance demands, especially, when it is considered as the first and leading rite of the Christian dispensation.

He has occasionally conversed with his ministerial brethren on the subject, and has expressed to some of them, his wish that they would take it up, but he could not prevail with them so to do. He has also read most of the works on the subject, which have appeared from time to time, and collected and transcribed from them, those sentiments which accorded with his own views, and ap-

peared to him most worthy of notice. The principal authors he has laid under tribute, are, Rev. Dr. Williams, Ewing, Edwards, Price, and Bass, and the late Mr. Taylor. To these authors he would express his grateful acknowledgments, for the assistance they have afforded him. He has, usually, embodied the sentiments of these writers in the different parts of this work, where they appeared most adapted to his purpose and plan, and he has generally given them in his own language. He has, therefore, made no reference to any of their works, by way of marginal quotation, with the exception of Mr. Taylor's letters to the deacon of a baptist church. The reason of his noticing the latter, will appear obvious to the reader.

This plan he has adopted, in order to give as clear a view of the subject, as his abilities would enable him, and to prevent the mind of the reader from being drawn away from the relative bearings of those points im-

mediately before him, on the whole question: that his decision, either for the principles here laid down, or against them; might be formed, on a review of the whole, and not of particular or detached parts.

The author makes no apology for the sentiments advanced, as he feels a conviction, that they are founded on the historical records of the sacred scriptures; at the same time, he feels some apology is needful, for the imperfect manner in which the work is executed, and for the defects which may be discovered in it. The author considers the epithets, “a Baptist,” and “the Baptist Denomination,” to be improperly and unjustly assumed, as exclusively applicable to themselves, by those who deny family baptism; and that those who practice family baptism, are equally entitled to the appellation, as they believe baptism to be a scriptural ordinance, as really as their opponents, and practice it to a greater extent. For this

reason, he has chosen for himself, and his work, the title of “The Family Baptist.” This title he has adopted for two reasons.

I. It is more comprehensive, clear, definite, and appropriate, than that of “Pædobaptist,” when applied to those so called, because they do not confine baptism to infants, but extend it to children of any age, who are under the government of their parents.

II. It is a title our opponents can never appropriate to themselves. They may, it is true, occasionally baptize all the individuals of a family, both parents and children; but they baptize them only in their individual capacity, on the personal profession of their faith, by the same principle on which they baptize persons who bear no family relation to each other. They act on a principle quite opposite to that, on which children are admitted in the right, and on the faith of their

parents, which is the principle on which the families of Noah, Abraham, Lydia, and the Gaoler, were admitted into their respective dispensations, by its introductory rite; and thereby, placed under the same means of grace with their parents, for their instruction in the knowledge of those sacred truths which God had revealed, and the certainty of which he had confirmed and sealed to them both, by the sacred rite he had appointed.

The author hopes, he shall not be charged with unwarrantable presumption, if he suggests a thought, or two, on this head. In his opinion, those who practice family baptism, are under a misnomer, and have no distinctive appellation, which expresses correctly their principles or practice. Should the terms, "family baptist and family baptism," be adopted and made use of in conversation, preaching, and writing, they would soon become established, and supersede the

invidious and indefinite terms, "independent and baptist. These terms are calculated to mislead, because independents hold with baptism, and baptists, in general, are in their church government, independent. These distinctions, our opponents seem assiduous to maintain, and by our forbearance, we patronize them therein. The author is also fully aware, that this distinction has sometimes been employed to convey the insinuation, that independents are indifferent to baptism, or neglect it altogether, and they have been held up to scorn, and treated as unbaptized persons.

Let the following investigation speak for them, whether they are not entitled to the appellation of "baptist," as well as their opponents, and to be respected as such.

The author begs it to be understood, that his work is not intended as a formal refutation, of the system of those who differ from

him on the subject ; therefore, when he has introduced their sentiments, it has been by way of comparison with his own, that the reader might form his own judgment, and adopt that side of the question, which his convictions may lead him to think, has the strongest claim. The author has no personal animosity towards those who differ from him on the subject, and could he have done justice to his subject, by employing language less strong and decided, than he has sometimes made use of, he would gladly have done so.

It is the author's earnest desire and prayer, that we may all be "baptized into one spirit," if not into one form or sentiment, on the subject, and that we may continue fighting against the common enemies of christianity, under the same captain of salvation, if not under the same banner ; that by the united exertions of christians of various denominations, the kingdom of Satan may be dashed

to the ground, and the kingdom of Immanuel advanced triumphantly, until all the families and nations of the earth shall be converted, and embrace "the truth as it is in Jesus." He would devoutly say, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory Amen and Amen."

G. NEWBURY.

Burnham, Bucks.

INTRODUCTION.

BAPTISM is a subject, which has divided the professing church of Christ for ages, and different communities have adopted different systems respecting it: nor is this the only division that has taken place; but those who have been united in the general outlines of the same system, have differed respecting some of its particular parts and designs. This has been common to all the systems: so that the advocate of one, cannot throw a stone at the other, without having it rebound on his own head. This should humble all, and produce respectful deference to the opinions of each other, however confident we may feel, that we ourselves are in the right.

As this is the state of the question, it is desirable, if possible, to reduce each system to its first principles; or to that fundamental proposition, whether simple or complex, on which each system is built, and to place them in contrast, by way of comparison. Whether the following statement approaches near to this point, must be left for each party to judge for themselves; and in any point in

which the author is incorrect, it will be for the supporters of each system, to point out the error, and present to the public their own fundamental principle, in their own language, and their reasons for holding it.

In the author's view, three systems have been adopted, and three fundamental propositions, on some one of which, each system is built, in relation to the subject of baptism.

Proposition I. Christian baptism is regeneration ; wherein the subject is made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

II. Christian baptism is an ordinance given to the church, for the admission of its members into a full communion in its privileges ; and to which none have a right, but those who, by a credible profession of their faith in Christ, can give evidences of their regeneration.

III. Christian baptism is God's gracious and confirming seal, to his own revealed truth, and an introductory means of grace, to bring its subjects into that relation to the church, which places them under those ministerial instructions, which are the means, through the influences of the Holy Spirit, of producing regeneration, or of advancing the spiritual growth of the soul, which has been born again ; thereby, qualifying the subject

to be admitted into a full communion with the church, in all her privileges.

The truth of the first proposition, upon the subject of baptism, the author denies, as being unscriptural, and contrary to the natural order of things, as it substitutes the sign for the thing signified; and ascribes to the visible agent and sign, that which exclusively belongs to the operations of the Spirit of God.

The truth of the second proposition is also denied, upon the principle that it assumes the right of establishing an absolute law, or rule, as to the qualification required in the subjects of baptism. It acts on a principle which the apostles never acted upon, and assumes a prerogative, to set in judgment on the spiritual condition of the subject, of which Christ alone can be the judge, and with which prerogative, he never invested any apostles, ministers, or church.

The third proposition, is held and maintained in the following work, as the scriptural one.

There are also, two propositions maintained in regard to the mode of baptism.

Proposition I. The scriptural mode of christian baptism, is nothing less than a total immersion, or plunging of the body under water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost.*

* The question has been asked—Whether the unworthiness of the agent who administers the ordinance of

II. The scriptural mode of christian baptism, is the application of water to the body, either by sprinkling, pouring, or plunging, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The truth of the first proposition, that plunging or immersion, is essential to the administration of the ordinance, is denied ; and it is affirmed, that sprinkling, or pouring, are equally scriptural modes, as the essence of the ordinance does not consist in one mode, more than another, but in the sacred names into which the subject is baptized ; and the reasons for this decision, will be found in the following pages.

The author would also advertize his readers, that he has adopted the following rules of interpretation.

Rule I. That the scripture is in accordance with itself, and that one part is entitled to be illustrated by another ; “ comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”

II. That the evidence afforded, either by the Old or New Testament, in support of baptism, from the unfitness of his character, or his union to a professing christian church, that is corrupt in some of its doctrines and discipline : does, or does not, invalidate the ordinance ? In the author’s opinion, it does not, as long as the original form of the institution is retained, of baptizing the subject in the name of the Father, &c. ; and for this reason, that the character of the agent who affixes the seal to a deed, does not destroy its validity.

the subject treated of, is admissible, for its confirmation; from the unity of their design; the analogy that subsists between one dispensation and another; as well as from the frequent reference the New makes to the Old, in relation to its doctrines, precepts, and ritual institutions.

III. That the change from one dispensation to another, which the church has undergone in its external modes of worship, has not altered nor destroyed the fundamental laws, essential constitution, or identity of the church, in respect to its rights and privileges.

IV. That rights and privileges once granted and confirmed, continue unaltered, and remain in full force through every succeeding dispensation; except subsequently abolished by a positive law, published and made known by the lawgiver himself.

V. That there is an analogy between the corresponding rites and ordinance of one dispensation and another, in their design, the rights of their subjects, extent of privileges, and moral ends.

Having premised these observations, as a key to his work, the author must request of his readers, to bear them in mind as they proceed; and then, he must leave them to

judge for themselves, how far his investigations and conclusion, bear him out in his principles.

N. B. The author has avoided the use of the term sacrament, as the propriety of its use in reference to baptism is disputed, and he has, in general, substituted the terms introductory or initiatory rite, ordinance, &c. in reference to baptism; and commemorative rite, &c. in reference to the Lord's supper, &c.

CONTENTS.

Chap.

PART I.

- I. The different dispensations of the church from the beginning, to the coming of Christ.
- II. The history of John the baptist's ministry and baptism.
- III. The history of Christ's personal ministry, as connected with baptism, and his conduct to children.
- IV. Christ's final commission to his disciples.
- V. The disciples opening their commission on the day of pentecost.
- VI. The apostles' practice in baptizing houses or families.

PART II.

THE MODE OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

- I. Preliminary observations.
- II. The scriptural use of the terms, baptize and baptism.
- III. Baptism by the Holy Ghost.
- IV. Baptism by water.
- V. A review of the principal grounds and reasons adduced in support of immersion baptism.
- VI. Miscellaneous observations on the mode of baptism.

PART III.

THE MORAL DESIGNS OF BAPTISM.

- I. In its relation to former dispensations.
- II. In its relation to the preaching of the gospel.
- III. In its relation to those duties, which are subsequent to baptism, as pointed out in the scriptures.
- IV. In its relation to families.
- V. In its relation to ministers and churches.
- VI. In relation to missions.

ERRATA.

Page.	Line.	
1	7.	Instead of performs, read <i>perform</i> .
1	9.	— is— <i>as</i> .
6	14.	— ministry— <i>ministers</i> .
12	15.	—, preuous— <i>previous</i> .
17	14.	— of the very same distinguishing property <i>in</i> , &c.
24	11.	— sanctifying— <i>sanctioning</i> .
34	11.	— he — <i>Christ</i> .
60	11.	— preaching— <i>teaching</i> .
129	21.	— they— <i>then</i> .
161	30.	— our fruit— <i>your fruit</i> .

The author is sorry that, through his distance from the press, the foregoing errata has crept into the work, which he must beg the reader to correct.

PROPERTY OF
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
AT CHAMPLAIN

PART FIRST.
ON THE PROPER SUBJECTS OF
BAPTISM.

CHAPTER I.

INCLUDING THE DIFFERENT DISPENSATIONS OF THE
CHURCH, FROM THE BEGINNING, TO THE COMING
OF CHRIST.

IN the performance of any religious duty, our concern should be to execute it agreeably to the revealed will of God, as given in his word—His will being the proper rule of our actions.

The sacred Scriptures, in reference to human actions, performs a twofold part; they make more clear, certain, and authentic, what human reason perceived is probable; they enjoin duties, which without them never could have been discovered as obligatory. From this twofold use of divine revelation, arises the obvious distinction between moral and positive law. This distinction, as such, is clear upon this principle; viz. in the moral command, we discern the reason of the precept in the command itself; but

in the positive, the reason does not appear so as to make it obligatory, except on the mere authority of the lawgiver. Thus, to love, fear, and serve God, are moral duties, and the precept to do so, is sufficiently clear of itself, from our relation to him. But the mode how, and the season when, we should render any external act of worship to him, whether the fifth, seventh, or tenth day, &c. can only be known by a positive injunction of the lawgiver; and this alone makes it obligatory, whether we can, or cannot, discern the reasons of its appointment. This principle applies to all the positive* institutions given in the word of God.

* All positive duties, or precepts, are of an external nature. They are the boundary lines between the church and the world. The very visibility of the church, in its external form, consists in its positive institutions. Those duties enjoined on man, the reason and propriety of which did not appear previous to their appointment, are of this nature.

If any positive and moral duties interfere, so that one must be omitted, the question is, which of the two must give place to the other. The Scriptures decide that the positive must uniformly give place to the moral. 1 Samuel xv. 22. "Behold! to obey is better than sacrifice." Matthew xii. 7. "But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." Obedience to God is a moral precept; acts of mercy to man, moral duties; sacrifices are positive ones. Positive duties should never be neglected when they do

The positive institutions recorded in divine revelation, were appointed at different times, and were connected with some particular event in the church ; as, at the commencement of some new circumstance in its history. Fixing some remarkable epoch, connected with some additional important promise made at the time, to which the institution was fixed as a seal and a sign, to pledge the certainty of the promise, till it had its accomplishment. Romans iv. 11-13.

The institutes and precepts appointed for the practice of the church, since the fall of man, are the following, viz. :

I. Sacrifices, and coats of skin. Genesis iii. 15-21.

II. The introduction of Noah and his family into the ark. Genesis vii. 1. Hebrews xi. 7-1. Peter iii. 20-21.

III. The bow in the clouds. Genesis ix. 13-17.

IV. Circumcision. Genesis xvii. 10-16.

V. The passover. Exodus xiii. 3-10.

VI. The cloud in the Red Sea. Exodus xiv. 19. 1 Corinthians x. 1-2.

VII. Baptism. Matthew xxviii. 19.

not interfere with moral, and should always be performed from moral considerations, drawn from the authority of the lawgiver.

VIII. The Lord's supper. Matthew xxvi. 27-28.

The coats of skin, the ark, and the cloud in the Red Sea, were appointed to seal the promises at the time to which they particularly referred; but to cease in their practice, and remain to us as types and figures of spiritual things. 1 Corinthians x. 7, 11. 1 Peter iii. 20-21; with others that might be mentioned. The others were to be adopted as universal rites, to be continued in practice till the promises they sealed had their accomplishment. These were,

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| 1. Sacrifices.* | } | These referred to the first advent of Christ, and were then to cease. |
| 2. Circumcision. | | |
| 3. The Passover. | | |
| 4. Baptism. | } | These were to continue till the second advent of Christ. |
| 5. The Lord's Supper. | | |

The bow in the clouds.	}	This being the sign and seal of God's providential promises to mankind, will continue till the end of time; and may be considered as an appendix to the covenant of grace.

* All propitiatory sacrifices, being not only seals, but also types, of him who was to make a final atonement for sin, had their accomplishment in that atonement, and therefore ceased with all other sacrifices which derived their virtue from the propitiatory; as also the Jewish ritual in general.

In some of these rites, there is a striking analogy between those of the Old and New Testament, in their use and design.

Circumcision	}	The initiatory rites of their respective dispensations.
and Baptism.		

The Pássover and the Lord's Supper.	}	The commemorative, and confirming rites, of their respective dispensations.

In speaking of these universal rites as seals, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of two things. First. The nature of the blessing to be sealed; and Second. The manner in which they may be said to be sealed.

The blessings God seals by these divinely appointed institutions, are the acts of his own free and sovereign grace, made to man as a fallen creature. These he gives as a free charter of mercies, and establishes them by his own covenant engagements, reveals and proclaims them in his free promises, and seals those promises by his institutions. This charter of covenanted mercies, with their seals, is not to be understood as a mutual agreement between man and man, in which each party stands on equal terms, and are at liberty to accede to, or dissent from, its conditions: no! but in the sense of those acts of authority, which are published as the royal

will of the sovereign, such as proclamations, letters patent, charters, &c. which are granted under his royal seal. In this sense, God, as the king of heaven does seal, by these divine institutions, the covenant of chartered mercies, without the previous assent of sinful mortals, who are laid by those acts of his favour, under the strongest obligations, to obey his mandates, believe his promises, respect his institutions, and seek the blessings exhibited and confirmed thereon. That this is a correct view of the seal, in reference to divine institutions is more fully confirmed, when we consider that God's ministry, as such, and as his representatives, are the only accredited persons appointed to administer (or superintend and appoint the administration, of) those rites in his name, to certify the truth of his word.

The principal blessing exhibited, is the righteousness of faith; or salvation and eternal life through the mediation of our divine Redeemer; and this he does exhibit, and seal, to all wherever the gospel comes with its institutions; whether it be received or rejected by those to whom the proclamation is made.

In tracing the different dispensations of chartered mercies and privileges, there is one principle recognized in them all, and runs

through the whole series of links, in this beautiful chain of gracious dispensations; namely, children were admitted into an external relation to the church, in the right and privilege of their parents, and by the same act of initiation as themselves.

This principle was intimated to our first parents: for in common with, and at the time of giving, the first promise,—the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, which is admitted to be an exhibition and promulgation of gospel grace, God promised children to them, and that the blessings exhibited in the promise, were for their children's benefit as well as their own, if not voluntarily rejected; as may be seen in the history of Cain and Abel, Genesis iv.—Hebrews xi. 4.

This principle was more clearly recognized in the introduction of Noah and his family into the ark. The privilege was this:—“Come thou, and all thy house, (family) into the ark?” The ground and reason of it was this,—“for thee have I seen righteous in this generation.” This introduction into the ark, Peter says, is a *figure of baptism*, 1 Peter iii. 20-21; but in what way it could be so, except in the children's being admitted into the ark in the father's right, is not easy to be conceived. This view of it, is also confirmed by the apostle, Hebrews xi. 7. “By

faith Noah being warned of God, prepared an ark for the saving of his house (family.)' Thus Noah answered a good conscience towards God, in preparing the ark, wherein eight souls were saved by water, or from water, on the faith and conduct of Noah; and this, says Peter, is a figure of baptism.

If it be objected that Noah's family were adults, this does not alter the principle; for the question is not what their age was, but in whose right were they admitted, in their own, or their parents? and the scripture is uniform, in ascribing it to be in the right of their parents. Heb. xi. 7.

If we pass on to God's dealings with Abraham, we shall discover the same principle, not only recognized, but fully established in the most definite manner, so as to exclude all doubt on the subject. God, in his dealings with Abraham, did not only confirm the former blessings and privileges already given to the church, but greatly enlarged them, with superadded favours and promises; which he ratified in the most solemn manner: Genesis, chap. xii. 2, 3; xvii. 7; xxii. 15-18.

At the same time, God appointed circumcision, as an additional seal to the covenant of chartered mercies, to be adopted for universal practice; and to continue in force, till

the promise it specially sealed, had its accomplishment: the essence of which was, to be a God to him and his seed after him. Genesis xvi. 9-14.

The principal promise given to Abraham and his seed, in substance was the same as that given to our first parents, and confirmed to Noah: "That in him, and in his seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed." Genesis xxii. 18.

This promise, the apostle declares, exclusively belongs to Christ, and to him alone. Galatians iii. 16. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made." He saith not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of one; "and to thy seed, which is Christ." Gal. iii. 16-17. Thus God preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, "in thee shall all nations be blessed," ver. 8; "so that he saw the day of Christ, and was glad." John viii. 5-6. "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of righteousness, which is by faith." Romans iv. 11. In the faith of the divine promise, he circumcised himself, and all the males of his house; and also Isaac, when he was only eight days old, according to the divine command. The reason why the seal was to be applied in early infancy, was this:—because the promise was to the seed of Abraham, the same as to

Abraham himself. The essence of the promise was this—to be a God to him, and his seed; therefore, the confirming seal was to be applied in early infancy.

Females, from the nature of this seal, were not personal subjects of it; but they were constant witnesses to it: and, it was a seal even to Sarah, and her daughters, in the same manner that sacrifices were, so that in this instance the children were treated as the parent; the males being treated as Abraham, and the females as Sarah.

That this seal, in its primary appointment, had respect to spiritual blessings; and only in a subordinate sense, a reference to temporal blessings, in the inheritance of Canaan by the Jews, will appear more evident, if we consider the extent of its application. God commanded Abraham, not only to circumcise himself, and the children of his own body, but that he should extend it to all the males in his house, born in his house, or bought with his money, which were not of his seed; (remarkable expression!) and consequently they had no share in the inheritance of Canaan; even these, were to have the seal applied in the same manner, and for the same end, as Abraham and his posterity; so that “the blessing of Abraham might begin to come on the gentiles, from its first appoint-

ment, even the righteousneous of faith." Galations iii. 15-11.

It is also an observable fact, that in every dispensation, temporal blessings were added to spiritual ones. To our first parents bread was promised, Genesis iii. 19; to Noah, seed-time and harvest; to Abraham, Canaan, Genesis viii. 22: by Christ, "seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be ADDED unto you." Matthew vi. 33.—Paul, "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Timothy iv. 8.

These promises, with others that might be mentioned, are as an appendix to the blessings of salvation; and are dependent thereon, and of which the bow in the cloud is the appointed seal.

Circumcision is not the first link in the chain; no, sacrifices were to continue till the divine oblation was made; and the bow, till the second coming of the Saviour: but though it is not the first link, yet, for its definitiveness and preciousness, it may justly be termed the golden link.

Those grants and seals which had been confirmed to Abraham, were engrafted into the Mosaic dispensation, particularly sacrifices and circumcision, or more properly speaking, the

Mosaic ritual was engrafted on them; and among its various institutions, (of which we cannot at present particularly speak,) there is one that claims our attention—the Passover.

This was a divine rite, instituted to commemorate Israel's deliverance out of Egypt; typifying and sealing spiritual blessings, especially our redemption by Christ. This ordinance bears the same analogy to the Lord's supper, as circumcision does to baptism.

In examining the history of the passover as a divine ordinance, we shall find that it required qualifications for its celebration; circumcision did not; for while circumcision was a precious necessary qualification, it was not the only one required.

The passover required that every individual who partook of it, should undergo a previous personal purification. And so strict was the law, that if any attempted to break through it, he was threatened to be cut off from his people: therefore, to prevent abuse, and in order to accommodate those who were unclean, or from home, &c. at the time of its first celebration, a second passover was appointed to be kept on the 14th day of the second month, Num. ix. 9-14. This order of things pointed out to them, and to us too, that something more of a personal nature in religion, is required for the celebration of a

commemorative ordinance, in which we are active agents, than in an initiatory ordinance, in which we are passive subjects.

If it be urged, that children underwent the same purifications as their parents, and did actually partake of the passover; granted; but this they could not do as feasting on a sacrifice commemoratively, before they had a capacity to understand its design; therefore, the Israelites were enjoined to instruct them into its meaning, as soon as they had capacity to understand it, Ex. xii. 26; that they might partake of it commemoratively, or as a commemorative ordinance. We see that God judged them suitable subjects for the initiatory seal, before they could be suitable subjects of the commemorative; and thus we see that these ordinances, in each case, have a closer analogy than appears at first sight. In tracing the analogies in the initiatory ordinance, we see that it claims priority in point of time; to be administered but once to the same subject, and in each case, the subject is passive in its administration; having the rite performed upon him, by an appointed agent: but in the commemorative, in each case, the previous purifications were to be repeated by each subject, as frequently as opportunity offered for its celebration.

None could partake of it commemoratively,

who had not a capacity to understand its nature and design; yet, possessing this, they were not entitled to the privileges, without conforming to the rules prescribed for its celebration, although subjects of the initiatory rite.

The Passover. } “ No unclean person shall
eat thereof.”

The Lord’s } “ Let a man examine him-
Supper. } self and eat of this bread.”

Any person eating it as a commemorative ordinance unworthily, in either case, is threatened with a similar punishment.

In the Pass- } To be cut off from his
over. } people.

In the Lord’s } He eats and drinks dam-
Supper. } nation (or condemnation) to
himself.

Thus we see in the former case, a person was judged a fit subject for the initiatory rite, even for years before he could be a capable subject of, or qualified for the commemorative rite; and, therefore, the latter required higher qualifications than the former.

The analogy between the passover and the Lord’s Supper, has in general been admitted by those who deny it between circumcision and baptism; but surely, the ground for the latter, is equally as clear and strong as that of the former: it rests on the same prin-

ciple, and is supported by the same divine authority. The same apostle who has said, "Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us," 1 Cor. v. 7; has also said, Colos. ii. 11-12, "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Now our present inquiry is not the particular meaning of the passage, but to notice, that the apostle draws the same analogy between circumcision and baptism in this passage, as he has done between the passover and the Lord's supper, in the other. This shews the discrepancy of the objection in the one case, as well as in the other; and its discordance with the sacred records.

In addition to the passover, one of the most distinguishing features of the Mosaic dispensations, was a system of *divers baptisms*. The following list of them may be noticed:—

I. The people were introduced into the Mosaic dispensation, by being baptized unto Moses, under the cloud, and in the Red Sea. Ex. xiv. 22.—1 Cor. x. 1-2.

II. The people were prepared, by a pre-

vious baptism, or purification, for receiving the law at Mount Sinai. Ex. xix. 14.

III. The tabernacle, with its furniture, &c. was dedicated by baptism. Ex. xxiv. 6-8. Lev. viii. 10-11.

IV. The priests were consecrated to their sacred office, among other things, by baptism. Ex. xix. 4; xxx. 18-21; xl. 12.

V. Various ceremonial uncleannesses were among other things, purified by baptism. Lev. xiv. 7-9; xvii. 15-16; xxii. 6. Num. xix. 7-21.

These divers baptisms were of three sorts: Sprinkling, Heb. ix. 13-19; Pouring, Lev. xiv. 18; Washing.

The baptisms were in constant practice among the Jews, from day to day, so that their minds must have been as familiar with them, as with any other practice of daily occurrence, and probably gave rise to the following practices among them in after ages.

I. Making it one essential article of their faith, in entering into covenant with God. If the person was a male, the articles of their faith were three, circumcision, baptism, sacrifices; if a female two, baptism and oblation.*

* An article in the *Congregational Magazine* for October, 1828, page 523, gives the following quotations from Dr. Lightfoot's works, folio edition, page 107.

"All the nation of Israel do assert, as with one

II. Their tradition of ceremoniously washing, or baptizing themselves before meat, and their furniture and cooking utensils after meat.

III. The practice of baptizing their proselytes, on their admission into the Jewish church, according to the note annexed:—Whenever any heathen will betake himself, and be joined to the covenant of Israel; voluntary circumcision, baptism, and oblation, are required; but, if a woman, baptism and oblation.

These divers baptisms, before mentioned, were the very same distinguishing property of the Mosaic dispensation; as sacrifices and circumcision had been instituted and practiced in the church, for centuries before their appointment. Now, seeing that these divers baptisms were so intimately connected, and so completely interwoven with all the Jewish religious institutions, we need not wonder, that the people went out so easily, in such

mouth, that all the nation of Israel were brought into covenant among other things, by baptism. Israel, saith Maimodies, the great interpreter of the Jewish law, was admitted into covenant by three things, namely—circumcision, baptism, and sacrifice. Again, he says, whenever any heathen will betake himself and be joined to the covenant of Israel, voluntary circumcision, baptism, and oblation, are required; but, if a woman, baptism and oblation.”

multitudes, to John's baptism. The question, therefore, to which the Jews demanded an answer from John, when they asked him, why he baptized? was not, why he used water, as the ritual sign of his ministry, but what was the specific end for which he used it; and this is a point, to which our attention will be directed in the next chapter.

There are many scripture prophecies that refer to gospel times, that include children with their parents; and as they stood in relation to God and the church, at the time of their delivery, whatever the spirit of prophecy promises in their favour, is adding light to light. Some of these prophecies we shall have occasion to notice as we proceed.

CHAPTER II.

THE HISTORY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST'S MINISTRY AND BAPTISM.

IN the close of the preceding Chapter, allusion was made to those prophecies, which relate to children participating in the privileges of their parents, under the gospel dispensation. That remarkable one, Malachi iv. 5-6, is of this kind:—"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of that great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to (or with) the children, and the heart of the children to (or with) their fathers: lest I come, and smite the earth with a curse." That this was a direct prophecy of John the Baptist, is declared by the angel, who came to announce his birth to his father Zacharias. Luke i. 16-17: "And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God: and he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the father to (or with) the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

One thing is plain in the direct application of this passage to John, namely, the children were to partake of the benefits of John's ministry and rite, in common with their parents; that the object of his ministry and rite, was to turn the fathers to the Lord their God; and also to turn the children to the Lord their God; and thus to turn them to each other in the Lord their God; laying the parents under obligations to instruct their children, and the children to receive their instructions in the knowledge of their Lord their God; and so turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, (or just one,) thus to make ready a people prepared for the Lord; even the messenger of the covenant, who was suddenly or speedily to come to his temple, to introduce both parents and children into that dispensation, he was about to establish among them. Malachi iii. 1; Matthew iii. 2.

There is a question on John's ministry and rite, which it may be proper not entirely to overlook, viz. whether his ministry and rite belonged to the Mosaic or christian dispensation, or partook of both; or was a distinct one in itself.

In my humble opinion, it did not strictly or exclusively belong to either, but partook of both, and formed an intermediate link between them; instituted in order to prepare

the minds of the people, for the cessation of the one and the introduction of the other; making ready a people prepared for the Lord.

In confirmation of this, it should be observed, that John made no alteration in the constitution of the Jewish church; nor did he introduce any new or novel ceremony among them, as they were accustomed to divers baptisms in their temple worship, Heb. ix. 10, as well as by their traditions, which they had received to hold, Mark vii. 3-4. Such as the washing or baptizing of cups, tables, beds, &c.; nor did they admit any proselytes from among the gentiles into the communion of their church, without previously baptizing him and his children, as well as circumcising them, so that such proselytes looked more to their baptism, than their circumcision as the adopted children of Abraham.*

We find that when John went into the wilderness, on the borders of Jordan, to preach and baptize, he acted as an extraordinary purifying priest, and the people in multitudes resorted unto him, and were baptized by him; which, it may be presumed, they would not so readily have done, had they

* Mitchel's dissertation on the Resurrection of Christ.
—*Congregational Magazine*.

not been familiar with the ordinance from its frequent practice among them.

It may be further premised, that in the transition from one dispensation to another, there has been a gradual process of intermediate steps observed, before it could be properly said, that the former had entirely ceased, and the new one had fully commenced. And so cautious and gradual have been these changes, that they produced no sudden eruption, nor created any chasm between the one and the other. This is especially true respecting the Mosaic and gospel dispensations, which latter had been establishing itself forty years before the Jewish economy was completely dissolved, so that its decay was like a moth-eaten garment. Heb. i. 10-12.

It should also be remembered, that the transition from one dispensation to another, did not alter the essential constitution of the church, nor alter its relation to God, any more than a man's changing his clothes or his diet, alters his individual identity. And, it is also evident, from the history of the church, that those changes which have been introduced from time to time, in connexion with other circumstances, have consisted principally of two things.

I. Either in the revelation of some additional promise to the covenant of grace, with

its confirming seal, as in the cases of Noah, Abraham, and Moses.

II. The changing of those seals, when the promises which they confirmed were accomplished, for others more congenial to the dispensation that was to succeed ; as in the case of the gospel, which, among other circumstances, has changed the initiatory ordinance of circumcision for that of baptism, and the commemorative ordinance of the passover, for that of the Lord's supper: consequently, those essential grants and privileges, which had been previously confirmed to the church, continued in full force.

Now children had stood in relation to the church for about four thousand years, and that relation had been confirmed to them with increasing evidence, in each succeeding dispensation ; and as there is not a single passage in the New Testament to be found which abrogates this relation, but several which expressly confirm it ; therefore, it must follow as an inevitable consequence, that their relation to the church, and their privileges in it remain unaltered, and in full force, according to their capacity to enjoy them, under the gospel dispensation, as under the former.

Having premised the above considerations, we shall now proceed to the examination of

John's ministry and rite ; to see if there is any thing in the history and nature of them, to bear out that remarkable prophecy respecting him. That "he shall turn the children with their fathers, to the Lord their God."*

That the mission and baptism of John was by divine appointment, appears ;

I. From the annunciation of the angel Gabriel at his birth. Luke i. 17.

II. Christ's sanctifying his baptism. Matthew iii. 13.

III. From the appeal Christ makes to it, in answer to the question the Jews put to him, respecting his authority. Matthew xxi. 23-27.

We learn from the history of John the baptist, or baptizer, that he was a Jew by birth, the son of a priest. That he was introduced into the Jewish church at eight days old, by the initiatory ordinance of circumcision. Luke i. 59.

The history of John's mission is short and general, contained principally in Matthew iii.

* It is proper here to remark, that though John's baptizing rite, was not a new or novel institution to the Jews, yet it was new in its specific object, for which he was commissioned from heaven to use it, namely, to excite in the people a spirit of repentance and expectation of the immediate appearance of the Messiah, whose shoes he considered himself unworthy to unloose.

Luke iii. 1-18. With some other occasional references, which we may notice as we pass along.

The express design of his ministry and baptism was declared to be, "To prepare the way of the Lord." To raise the expectations, and direct the minds of the people in general, to the speedy coming of the Messiah; and to apprize them, that he was about to introduce a new and more excellent dispensation amongst them, which he denominated "the kingdom of heaven."

In expectation of this event, he exhorted them to a general repentance; and seconded his message by a general purification, by the ordinance of baptism; the same as Moses was commissioned to purify the people, previous to the giving of the law. Exodus xix. 10-14.

The Jews readily acceded to his baptism, as being in accordance with the divers baptisms in use among them. Hebrews ix. 10.

John had been from his infancy a member of the Jewish church, and so were those who were baptized by him; nor did he or they cease to be so after their baptism. This may seem strange at first sight, but it should be remembered, that John made no alteration in the church, he only acted as an extraordinary purifying priest, in the manner and

spirit of the prophet Elijah. Malachi iv. 5. Matthew xvii. 10-13.

That John's disciples understood the ordinance of baptism, as a purifying ordinance, appears from this fact, that they united with the Jews in disputing or raising a question on the subject of purification. John iii. 25.

Now, as John, and those he baptized, continued to be members of the Jewish church, and from the constitution of that church, infants were introduced into it, by the initiatory ordinance of circumcision; it will appear, if the subject be properly weighed, that there is reason to believe, that whatever was the nature of John's cleansing rite, parents and children partook of it in common.

This inference will be strengthened, if we consider;

I. That infants and children, were liable to the same ceremonial pollutions with their parents.

II. That infants and children, as well as adults, were capable subjects of the ordinance of baptism.

III. That general terms are intended to include all the species that are capable, and that such are the terms used in the history of John's baptism, such as ALL JUDEA;—ALL THE PEOPLE;—ALL the region round about Jordan. Matt. iii. 5. And that ALL

were baptized of him, in (or at) Jordan. Mark i. 5. Such are the terms the Holy Spirit uses, to express the congregated multitudes promiscuously brought together, and that he baptized them ALL. Yes, he baptized them ALL, old and young, rich and poor, master and servant, male and female, parents and children; ALL those vast multitudes that came to him from day to day, were baptized of John in (or at) the Jordan; whatever their age, sex, or condition in life; and that none were exempted that came to his baptism.

We may therefore, ask, by what rule of equity, or justice, are any authorized to set up an excluding barrier against infants and children, where the Holy Spirit has set up none.

Two objections are raised against the above conclusions.

I. That children are not mentioned in the history of John's baptism; this is true, nor are women once mentioned in the same history; so that if the conclusion of exclusion hold good against the one, it must also against the other. The fact is, that this is an argument in their favour rather than against them; for it is a common rule, in the use of general terms, which include all the species, not to mention the species distinctly

where no special reason of exception required it; but where it is omitted, the general terms are to be taken in their largest acceptation, and to be understood as including, (instead of excluding,) all the species.

II. The second objection is this,—that those who were baptized by John confessed their sins. This is the strongest argument that can be urged against infant baptism. On the first view, this may seem to be fatal to their claims, as far as John's history is concerned; but, when fairly tried, it will become scattered like chaff before the wind.

1. If we consider the nature of the language used throughout the history, as referring to those who confessed their sins, this they did as collective bodies, and not as individuals* separately: therefore, this taken in all fair construction, can only be considered as of a general nature; such as we find in other parts of scripture, as in Joel ii. 16:—
 “Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breast.”

“They came to him in classes,” Luke iii. 10-14.

The multitude at large, composed of dif-

* The only instance of individual baptism the history gives, is that of Christ.

ferent ages, sexes, and conditions of life; also, the publicans, the soldiers, the pharisees and sadducees; (at least, some of them,) and John baptized them all, without distinction of sects or profession.

Now, as John baptized multitudes upon multitudes, that came day after day to his baptism, and refused none; it cannot be supposed for one single moment, that he deemed them all true penitents; no, the language he addressed to them, at the time of their baptism, is sufficient to prove this fact. He charged not only the pharisees and sadducees, but the multitude at large, with the appellation of a generation of vipers. Luke iii. 7. He warned them of the wrath to come; exhorted them to future genuine repentance and reformation; cautioned them against trusting in their external privileges, as the children of Abraham; assured them of the judgment that would speedily overtake them, if they continued unfruitful. For now was the axe laid to the roots of the trees, &c. And to crown the whole, he informs them that though he did not attempt to distinguish their true character, there was one who would speedily succeed him; (of whom he was but the humble and unworthy forerunner) who would, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, thoroughly purge his church, as

the winnowing fan scatters the chaff of the threshing floor.

It may be farther remarked, that to prove the above objection of any force or value, it must be proved, that John baptized none but such as made an individual and personal confession of their sins to him; but this conclusion the history will not admit; so that upon the whole we may conclude, that, as in general repentance and reformation, as well as in general judgments, children are included with their parents, though not expressly noticed; that the weight of evidence, that John baptized infants with their parents, is much stronger in favour of them than against them.

But even if it could be proved to a demonstration, that John did not baptize a single infant, yet would it not disprove their right to christian baptism; as his ministry and baptism did not properly belong to the christian or gospel dispensation, it was of short duration, and ended in his own death. The mode of John's baptism has been omitted, till that part of the subject shall be discussed, only observing that the multitudes that were baptized by John from day to day, and week after week, would render it impossible for him to dip them all in Jordan, &c.

John's ministry and baptizing rite, met

with almost universal acceptance, so much so, that it became almost national. Multitudes of people, of the different ranks of society, not only round about Jordan, but from all parts of Judea, and even from Jerusalem, came to be baptized of John in Jordan; not excepting, even some of the pharisees and sadducees. It appears that John had no personal acquaintance with Christ, previous to his application to him for baptism, for he positively declared, I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining upon him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost; and I saw, and bear record, that this is the Son of God. John i. 33-34.

Though John had no previous knowledge of the person of Christ, yet he had a presentiment of mind, that he was the person to whom his ministry and baptism particularly referred, when he applied to him for baptism; which led John to a disposition to decline the honour of baptizing him, as unworthy of the office, and as standing more in need of being baptized by Christ, than to baptize him: this objection was overruled by Christ informing him, that it was needful at that time, for the purpose of his manifest-

ation unto Israel; and thus to fulfil all righteousness, or to discharge that part of the divine will which was required by this ordinance, as the means of his manifestation unto Israel: this seems to be the meaning of this passage, "to fulfil all righteousness," and not to suppose that Christ needed baptism on account of any moral, or ceremonial uncleanness, (as some have supposed). No, "he was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners," and sin too. Heb. vii. 26.

Whatever conviction John had of Christ being the Messiah, previous to his baptism, he had not had as yet that accredited testimony which had been promised him. This took place at or immediately after his baptism, in the visible descent of the Holy Ghost resting on him, accompanied by a voice from heaven, at the same time declaring him to be the Father's beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased.

About the same time that John baptized Christ, the Pharisees sent a deputation of priests and Levites from Jerusalem to John, to inquire of him the character he assumed; whether that of the Messiah or not, and the reasons of his following up his ministry by a general baptism. This gave John a fair opportunity of declaring himself, and the recent

baptism of Christ, with the extraordinary and confirming circumstances attending it, gave him a better opportunity to explain the nature, design, and end, of his own ministry and baptism; and this he did by contrasting its inferiority, with that of Christ's: 'I baptize with water, he shall baptize with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.' His office was to direct them to Christ—to manifest Christ to them; and having obtained this important end of his office, he must now recede, to give place to his more illustrious successor; who, though he came after him, was preferred before him, John i. 7-8-15. Thus John receded like the morning star before the rising sun, saying, "He must increase, but I must decrease." John iii. 30.

It appears that Christ continued to attend the ministry of John, for at least some days after his baptism; and that he was standing among the people at the time the deputies were making their inquiries of John, i. 26; John answered them, saying, "I baptize with water, but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not," &c.

The day after this event, as Jesus was coming towards John, he pointed him out to the people, as the Lamb of God, that taketh away (or beareth: margin) the sins of the world; and thus while he exhorted the peo-

ple to repentance, he directed them to Christ, both as the Son of God, and the only Saviour by whom they could obtain the remission of sins; and therefore baptized them as a means of grace, in connexion with his preaching, to promote their repentance and faith in Christ for salvation, read John i. 29-36.

Passing by the temptation of Christ.

Shortly after those two concurrent circumstances of his baptism and the deputation from Jerusalem took place, he began to call his apostles, commissioned them to baptize, and to unite with himself in preaching the gospel. The strain of his preaching was similar to that of John's; Christ preached, saying, "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." Mark i. 14-15, compared with Matthew iii. 1. While Christ was preaching, and his disciples were baptizing, vast numbers flocked to him and were discipled to him by baptism; yes, by baptism: after the same manner, John made disciples, John iv. i. This gave some uneasiness to some of John's disciples, who came and informed him of the circumstance or event: this gave John another opportunity of confirming his former testimony and declarations concerning Christ. And he declared to them, that so far from giving him

the least inquietude, it was a source of the greatest satisfaction, and purest joy, to see the ultimate end of his ministry and baptism so speedily accomplished in the manifestation of Christ to Israel; and, therefore, he recommended their most serious attention to Christ, declaring at the close (if not of his public ministry) “he that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” John iii. 22-36. After this, Herod invited John to court, made him it should seem, his domestic chaplain; for a time heard him with gladness, and attended to his advice till it came in contact with his lusts, when by the stratagem of his adulterous connexion, Herod sent him to prison, and then beheaded him there; and this concludes the life, ministry, and baptism of John, at the same time.

CHAPTER III.

THE HISTORY OF CHRIST'S PERSONAL MINISTRY AS
CONNECTED WITH BAPTISM, AND HIS CONDUCT TO
CHILDREN.

JOHN iv. 1-2, it is said, "that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples," (or apostles).*

We remarked above, that John's ministry and baptism ceased with his own death. He was like the bright and morning star, that becomes *eclipsed* by the refulgent rays of the rising sun. Hence, he said of Christ, He must increase, I must decrease, John iii. 30. Christ confirmed this fact, when he declared, that the least in the kingdom of heaven, (or gospel dispensation,) was greater than John the baptist. Matt. ii. 2.

We read also, that some of John's disciples were baptized by the apostles, when the gospel dispensation was introduced by them. Acts xix. 3-5. It does not appear

* The term apostle has been adopted, to distinguish them from those disciples they baptized.

that John and the Lord Jesus ever acted in connexion with each other, either in their ministry or baptism, but kept perfectly distinct in the discharge of their respective missions, as to place and action, although they bore testimony to the divinity of each other's mission; their disciples were also distinctively marked either as the disciples of John, or the disciples of Jesus: nor does it appear, that while they remained the disciples of one, they were ever acknowledged as the disciples of the other, at the same time.

We find also by the history, that while John was baptizing in Enon, near Salim, Jesus and his disciples removed to some other part of the country, or neighbourhood, and made and baptized more disciples than John. John iii. 22-23. iv. 12.

This history informs us of one very important fact, namely, that the practice of baptism by the apostles, under the direction of Christ, was much more prevalent and constant, than we have been accustomed to think. It is said, that John baptized ALL the region round about Jordan, &c. which must have amounted to hundreds and thousands. Then how vastly numerous must those have been, which were baptized by the apostles at the command of Christ!! We would ask, could Christ, or his apostles, any

more than John, esteem or believe, that these multitudes were all truly converted characters? Surely not.

All that can in fairness be said, is, that as assembled multitudes, they made a general surrender of themselves in companies and families to Christ, after the manner of John's baptism. It should be particularly observed also, that although women and children are not mentioned in the history of John's mission, they are particularly noticed as composing part of the numerous companies that attended on Christ's ministry, and partook of its benefits, according to their capacities.

There are four instances in which children are particularly noticed in relation to Christ.

I. That He miraculously fed them with the loaves and fishes, with the rest of the multitude. "And they that did eat were above four thousand men, besides women and children." Matt. xv. 38.

II. Their praising Christ in the temple. Matt. xxi. 15-16. And when the chief priest and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the *children* crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him "hearest thou what these say?" and Jesus saith unto them, "Yea; have ye never read, out of the mouth of *babes* and *sucklings* thou hast perfected praise?"

III. Parents bringing their children to Christ to be blessed. Mark x. 13-16. And they brought young children unto him, that he should touch them: (that he should put his hands on them, and pray. Mat. xix. 15) and his disciples rebuked those that brought them, but when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, "Suffer the little *children* to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

IV. And Jesus took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, (his disciples,) "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me." Mark ix. 36-37. Luke ix. 47-48. And Jesus perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, and said unto them, "Whosoever shall receive *this child* in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great."

In reviewing the above passages as collated together, the following remarks arise out of them.

Still bear in mind, that these children were members of the Jewish church, and so also was Christ, and his apostles : and that three of the above transactions, had an immediate relation to religious acts, approved of and vindicated by Christ ; who declares those children to be the subjects of prophecy, and actual subjects of the kingdom of God ; and that they were to be received by the disciples in his, and his father's name.

Moreover, from these passages, we have not only a demonstrable proof, that children composed a part of those multitudes, who attended on the ministry of Christ ; but, that they partook of the benefits of his mission, according to their different capacities ; they partook of the food miraculously provided for the multitudes. They joined with them, in their ascriptions of praise to Christ, on his public entrance into Jerusalem ; and infants who were incapable of these exercises, were brought to him, and were blessed by him, as members of his kingdom. To remove all doubt, as to the visible relation they should stand in to him, in the dispensation he was about to establish, he took a child and set him by himself in the midst of the disciples,

and then took him in his arms, and with the authority of legislation, enjoined them to receive this little child, and such little children, in his name. He assigned two reasons, why they should receive such little children in his name.

I. From a regard to the will and example of Christ, who admitted them to a visible relation with himself. Mark x. 13-16. He added in a parenthesis, by way of appendix, the qualifications that adults must possess, to become the proper subjects of his kingdom. But this explanation of the dispositions necessary in adults, could never be intended to exclude those little children, he had previously confirmed in the privilege of being subjects of his kingdom; especially, as immediately after the explanation, (yes, after the explanation!) he took them up in his arms, and blessed them. Then it must be certain, that Christ's declaration concerning little children, and his conduct to them, could not be intended to *exclude them*, who-soever it *included* besides.

When it is considered, that these children were members of the Jewish church at the time that Christ blessed them, into which church Christ had himself been initiated in his infancy, by the same rite by which they had been; we cannot for one moment suppose,

that by blessing them, Christ intended to dispossess them of a privilege they had enjoyed, for more than four thousand years; no, it was the completest confirmation, for the season, that could be well expected or given.

If it should be replied to the above statement, that there is no proof that Christ, (by his disciples,) ever baptized one of those infants that have been referred to, or any other; we answer, neither is there any particular mention made of either men or women having been baptized, the history only informs us, that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John. John iv. 1.

That a very great interest was taken both by Christ, and the parents, or others, on behalf of the spiritual benefit of these children, is evident; and that Christ confirmed them, as the subjects of his kingdom, and as standing in a visible relation to him; by a legislative act, of the highest authority. And therefore, from this additional evidence, the same inference that was drawn in favour of infants from John's baptism, is equally applicable to them when baptism was performed by Christ's disciples.* But it should

* It has been suggested, whether the disciples had not previously baptized those children, which was the reason they thought it needless to trouble their master with them. This thought is not unworthy of consideration.

be clearly understood, and distinctly observed, that the present stage of the inquiry is not so much, whether they were or were not baptized by Christ; but whether Christ abolished or confirmed that visible relation of children to the church, which had subsisted for (at least) four thousand years. And from the above inductions it must appear, that instead of his abolishing these privileges, he repeatedly ratified them, by the most unequivocal sanction, they were capable of receiving from his high authority.

II. The Second reason he assigns for receiving them, is, that by this means materials would be provided to fill up the church and ministry, with a succession to the end of time. It would also lay the church under obligations to educate them in the principles of the gospel. To receive any one in the name of Christ, is to treat him as visibly belonging to him. This is evident from Mark ix. 41. "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water in my name, because you BELONG to Christ: verily, I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." This may have respect to the first act of recognizing any one in his visible relation to Christ, or to all subsequent acts, by which we treat them as such; Christ's assertion is applicable to both, and enjoins both on his disciples.

This act of legislation was confirmed, and the injunctions given by Christ, as the mediator, head, and lawgiver to his church ; in the midst of his disciples, in their collective capacity ; to whom, in that capacity, he was about to intrust the establishment of his kingdom in the world. And in order to make this act of legislation more certain and explicit, he took a little child, even an infant, and introduced him among them in their collective capacity, and first, set him by himself, as an act of nomination. Second, he took him up into his arms, as an act of presentation, for admission into their society, (though least among them all). Third, he then called upon them to admit, or confirm, the recognition of the act, by receiving this child into their society ; and thus to acknowledge him as their master and lawgiver : and to honour both himself and his Father. And that it should not be confined to *this child* alone, but be established as a precedent for all succeeding generations in his church, to the end of time.

Therefore he enjoined it on them, and their successors, as an act of religious obligation, to be engaged in from religious consideration, and performed from religious motives, and to be directed in its anticipations to religious ends, “ he that is least among

you, (even this infant,) shall be great ;” and to give the sanction of law to the whole, he subscribes and seals it with his own name, as the warrant of their conduct, and a direction for their future practice. “Whosoever,” &c.

It is true, that adults, under certain circumstances, are compared to little children, as Matt. xviii. 3 ; but this cannot be the meaning of the term in this passage, as the term “least,” evidently refers to the little child Christ had introduced into their society ; and assigned as a reason for their receiving him, that God could or would make him great : the antithesis is plain, and the conclusion correct, and worthy the wisdom of the lawgiver. There could be no reason at all, in his saying, receive this little child, because God can make that adult great, whom you esteem least. This would be nothing better than a solecism, and a gross absurdity, when Christ declared that little children were the subjects of his kingdom.

If it should be said, that in this historical account of Christ’s attention to children ; his pronouncing them to be suitable subjects of his visible kingdom ; his placing one among his apostles, requesting them to receive him both in his own and Father’s name, as a young disciple, and to treat all such little

children with the religious respect with which they would receive him and his Father ; that nothing is said about these children being baptized. This is very true, nor is there any thing said specifically and distinctly respecting the baptism of men and women, in the same history. The inspired author has related the fact in general terms. Having once mentioned the fact, that Jesus, by his apostles, made and baptized more disciples than John, he did not think it necessary to repeat it, as its practice was too common, and too well understood, to require it.

The passage establishes one very interesting and important fact, namely, that persons were made disciples of Christ by baptism, so that whenever any person is represented in the gospel history, as belonging to Christ, or as standing in a relation to him as a disciple ; that we are to conceive of such as having been baptized ; as baptism was the mode, and the only mode, by which they were discipled to him, whatever their age, sex, or circumstances in life might be. Therefore it is reasonable to believe, that this child was admitted into their society, as a young disciple, by the same rite.

It seems very natural to conceive, that Christ's conversation with Nicodemus was on the subject of baptism. The course of their

conversation turned upon the means of entering into Christ's kingdom; and he pointed out to him the necessity of entering into a visible and external relation to his kingdom, by the baptism of water; and into a spiritual and invisible relation, by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. "For except a man be born of water, and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And so explaining and enforcing the necessity of the one, by the practice of the other. Those mentioned, John vi. 60-66, must upon the above principle, have been baptized. They are distinctly marked as disciples, and distinguished from the apostles, and from Judas, who was one of the twelve. These disciples are said to have murmured at the doctrine Christ was teaching them, respecting the spiritual nature of his kingdom; and were so offended, that they went back and walked no more with him.

66. Now the reply that Christ made to these very disciples, is the most remarkable and striking to be conceived of. 64. "But there are some of you that believe not, (though baptized into a profession of discipleship to me), for Jesus knew from the beginning, who they were that believed not, and who should betray him." Does not this passage prove to a demonstration, that Christ

admitted persons to be disciplined to him by baptism, previous to their giving proof of conversion ; and that it must have been administered upon a different principle, and for a different purpose, than that of giving it as a testimonial of conversion already undergone ; no, it evidently appears to be intended, as a means of grace ; administered for the purpose of placing its subjects under that course of subsequent instruction ; which might be the means of their conversion, and belief in the doctrines of the gospel : upon this principle Christ was proceeding at this time, as he urged upon them the necessity of real conversion, and of faith in him, as the only means of obtaining salvation. And was not this design and conduct of Christ, to be a precedent to his ministers in every age ; by baptism, as a means of grace, to disciple all they can, that they may be brought into the gospel dispensation, and so placed under a course of instruction, which might, by the blessings of God, who alone can give effect to means, lead to the production of the moral designs ; and upon this principle, a child as well as an adult, might be disciplined to Christ by baptism.

It should be also kept in view, that the gospel dispensation, at this period, was only in a state of progressive arrangement for

definitive settlement. The Lord's supper was not as yet instituted, nor had the apostles received their final commission respecting baptism, as to its formula ; the extent of its application ; and its immediate connexion with preaching the gospel, as the ritual sign and confirming seal of their verbal message ; in discipling all nations into the visible kingdom of Christ. For the confirmation of these points, we must look into the succeeding history of baptism ; and we have no doubt, but it will carry us out in our principles, with additional weight in the scale of evidence.

CHAPTER IV.

CHRIST'S FINAL COMMISSION TO HIS DISCIPLES.

It may not be improper here, to insert a few of those prophecies that bear an aspect to national conversions, under the gospel dispensation.

Gen. xxvi. 4. "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Isaiah lii. 15. "So shall he sprinkle many nations."

Zechariah ii. 11. "And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people."

Mat. xxi. 43. "Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof."

That these prophecies, and others of the same import, have a reference to gospel times, and its dispensation, is generally admitted; and, it is equally certain, that they bear a national aspect, not of a political, but of a religious, nature. The blessings these nations were to participate, were to be in Abraham's seed, or Christ. Gal. iii. 16.

“ Now to Abraham, and his seed, were the promises made.” He saith not, and to seeds as of many, but of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ. This is that gospel blessing of Abraham that was to come on the gentiles. v. 8. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, “ in thee shall all nations be blessed.” These prophecies inform us, what was the nature of those blessings, which were to descend on them, through Christ. As nations, they were to be *joined to the Lord*—to be his people—to be sprinkled or dedicated to him. That a nation, bringing forth fruit, were to have the kingdom transferred to them ; upon the same principle, and to the same extent, in which it had been enjoyed by those from whom it was to be taken. The only question that seems to arise out of those passages is, whether the term nation is to be taken literally or figuratively ; for the whole, or only a part—for adults only, or to include children. In answer to these queries, we may ask, what are the blessings to be transferred ? We answer, the kingdom of heaven. That its blessings could not be of a political, but of a religious nature, will appear from the nature of Christ’s kingdom, “ not of this world ;” and the political condition of the jews at the time this

prophecy was delivered. The sceptre had already departed from Judah. The jews were reduced to a Roman province, and their lives, and property, subjugated to a Roman governor. Therefore the prophecy, which has a reference to a future event, must have respect to their church state and constitution, in respect to its internal and external privileges. For its constitution is not to be destroyed, but only to be transferred, with those external changes only, which would be better suited for its future enlargement and fruitfulness. This prophecy, therefore, is a key to the others; and, indeed, to all the prophecies of a similar nature, and to Christ's commission to his apostles.

Christ's commission to his apostles, Matt. xxviii. 19-20. "And Jesus said unto his disciples," or apostles, "go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I command you; and, lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world, amen."

Mark xvi. 15-16. "And he said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned."

I beg to submit the following paraphrase, as containing the substance, and harmonizing the commission as contained in the two evangelists. “And Jesus said to his apostles, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; teaching all nations, and baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I command you;” assuring them, that, “he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned: and, lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world, amen.

The first thing we should attend to, in this part of the inquiry, is this, namely;—that this is not the original institution of baptism by Christ to his apostles; no, he had previously instructed them in the nature, design, and subjects of this ordinance; and had authorised them to baptize disciples to himself, under his own immediate inspection; and that to a very large extent.

John iv. 1-3. “When, therefore, the Lord knew how the pharisees had heard, that Jesus had made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples) he left Judea,” &c. This fact sufficiently shews, that there was

no necessity for Christ, at this time, to enter either into the mode or subjects, of baptism, but simply to announce it as a part of the commission he was then investing them with. There are two things he particularly enjoins on them.

First. That whatever had been its previous formula; in future it should be administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Second. That it should no longer be confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but be extended with equal freedom and latitude to the gentile nations, to the very end of the world, and to the end of time.

Another circumstance we should particularly notice is, that Christ had previously, and repeatedly asserted and confirmed, the privilege of children, and even infants, as members of his church or kingdom, to these very apostles. He had introduced one into their society, and demanded of them, that they should receive it in his name. He had also expressed his high displeasure, and given them them his sharp rebuke, for their attempt to exclude infants from a visible access to him, as their divine friend and Saviour; and assigned as a reason, both for his rebuke, and his receiving and blessing those infants, that of such was the kingdom of heaven.

Therefore it seems morally impossible, that the disciples should understand their commission in a sense to exclude infants from their parents' privileges, in their external relation to the church. A sense they never had heard of; nay, a sense that never had been heard of since the world began.

The principal objections raised against the admission of infants from the commission, are three.

I. That they are not expressly mentioned in the commission, and this consequently implies their exclusion.

II. That there are qualifications required for baptism, of which infants are incapable.

III. That teaching and believing are placed before baptism.

These objections have a shew of reason in them, certainly; but it is only a shew, as the following reasons, which stand against them, will clearly prove.

1. There was no necessity to express them, particularly, as their relation to the church had been previously established, and confirmed by Christ himself. Now, it is a universal principle, that privileges once legally granted remain in full force, until repealed by some subsequent law. But, there is no such act even hinted at in the commission; nor in any other part of the

New Testament—our objectors themselves being judges; for they do not attempt to shew, that such a repeal is any where recorded; and if they cannot shew this, the objection, from its own discrepancy, falls to the ground.

II. As to the objection, that there are qualifications required in the commission, of which infants are incapable. This will appear equally unfounded, if we properly weigh the following considerations.

I. That the objection stands as much against their salvation, as it does against their baptism; for the same reason, and on the same footing; for the same qualifications which are required in the commission, for baptism, are equally required for salvation: for he that believeth not, shall be damned; whether young, or old—jew, or gentile—baptized, or not. If it should be replied, that the salvation of infants is inferred from other parts of scripture, this is readily granted; and so is the right of infants to baptism; and of the two cases, the latter is the most clearly proved. This shews, that the qualifications required of adults, both for baptism and salvation, cannot affect infants, either one way or the other.

II. That infants are capable of possessing

the very thing, which faith and repentance are designed to receive, as external acts performed by adults. These qualifications are necessary in adults, to shew that they are proper subjects; as the want of them, declares them to be open enemies, and rebels against the Saviour. But, must infants, who are incapable of these disqualifying acts of unbelief, &c. be treated as enemies and rebels, while they are equally capable with adults; of a participation of those blessings which adults are supposed to possess, when they come forward to be baptized: namely, infants are capable of a divine union to Christ, and of the influence of the Holy Spirit, with all the beneficial effects; such as regeneration, acceptance with God, and eternal life; and, indeed, by this divine union to the Saviour, they are capable of an actual participation of the benefits of his death, burial, and resurrection. And are they incapable of the seal and sign of that union? He that can believe this, let him believe it!

III. It is also evident that baptism, as the initiatory ordinance of christianity, has not a respect to any particular mode of it; but to the essence, nature, and design of it; not to a particular part, but to the whole; not to a mere circumstance, but to the essence of it.

It exhibits, regeneration, justification, reconciliation, sanctification, and eternal life. It exhibits our mystical union to Christ, and our need of the influences of the Spirit, with all the beneficial effects in communion with Christ, in all the saving benefits of his death, burial, and resurrection; of which infants are as capable of participating, for all the purposes of salvation, as professing and believing adults. Surely, then, while there is nothing to hinder infants from receiving the great blessings signified in baptism, they must be qualified to receive the sign and seal of these blessings.

To the above we may add, that in the case of circumcision, whether of a Jew or a proselyte, those qualifications were never required in an infant, which were required in the parent; and for this plain reason, because, the infant possessed the privilege in the parent's right; nor durst the parent refuse the right to the infant, while he claimed it for himself; for it was as much the command of God, to circumcise his Son, &c. as it was to circumcise himself. So that we see, qualifications must be judged of, according to the capacity of the subject; and the ordinance is not to be denied to those, who, by their tender age, are incapable of exercising faith and repentance, although they are required

of men who are capable of impenitence, and unbelief; without interdicting the ordinance to the less qualified, because they are not capable of producing the qualifications of the great. This analogy shews, how very differently God judges of qualifications, to what man judges. Therefore, it becomes us to exercise humility and modesty on this subject, and not to attempt to limit the most high; nor to separate what he has so evidently joined together.

III. As to the objection, that teaching and believing must precede baptism, and that none ought to be baptized, who are incapable of being taught, &c.

Upon this objection we remark,

I. That adults, who are capable of receiving instruction, should be previously taught, and express their belief in the gospel, is admitted by all, who believe in baptism; but this cannot affect those who are incapable of either, and consequently, are never required to perform acts, of which they are naturally incapable. Then, surely, they are not on account of this incapacity to be deprived of those rights and privileges, which had been legally granted them: if this were admitted, it would open a door for the most daring injustice against them. No, the same law that establishes their claim,

lays a double obligation on those whose duty it is to administer the rite; to maintain inviolate those privileges, against every attempt to infringe upon them.

II. It appears obvious also, that the terms teaching, believing, and baptizing, are convertible terms, for as a single word would not express all that was intended; one word must be placed first; thus, teaching and believing might be placed before baptizing, or baptizing might be placed before preaching and believing; and that these terms are convertible, appears evident from this fact, that teaching is enjoined after baptism, as well as previously to it. So that we must judge of the case, according to the ability of the subject to perform these external acts. Teach those who are capable, in order to their baptism; and baptize those who are incapable, in order to their teaching, &c.

This objection is so weak, that it is hardly worthy of a reply; but, for the sake of those, who may have their minds perplexed with it.

CHAPTER V.

THE DISCIPLES OPENING THEIR COMMISSION.

ACTS ii. 33.

THE following prophecies are worthy of notice, as connected with Peter's declaration. Acts ii. 39. "The promise is to you, and to your children."

Psalms cii. 28. "The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee."

Isaiah xlv. 23. "They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them."

Acts ii. 39. "The promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

That the first of these prophecies refers to gospel times, is evident, as the apostle expressly applies the two previous verses to Christ. Heb. i. 10-11-12; and that the second refers to the same period, seems equally certain, and that it principally refers to the restoration of the Jews to their former church

privileges, under the gospel dispensation. That Peter, (as well as the rest of the disciples), considered their commission, agreeably to such prophecies, as extending to children is self-evident, by Peter's including them in the first opening of his commission, in common with their parents. He declared that the promise, under the gospel dispensation, extended, in its benefits, to their children, as well as to themselves, as it had done under the former dispensation; and that those privileges should be renewed to their children, and to their offspring to the same extent, they had previously enjoyed them. The terms, seed and offspring, literally mean the lineal descent, whether children or children's children; so that whether the terms be applied to jew or gentile, or both, their children are declared to be co-participators with their parents, in those privileges and blessings. This is fully confirmed by the apostle, Rom. xi. 15-24, where he describes their being first cut off; and then their being ingrafted again into the same olive tree, from which, for their unbelief, they had been cut off, again to partake of the root and fatness of the tree. These privileges and blessings must be either internal and real, or external and relative. In the former sense they cannot belong to them hereditarily, as their

children, therefore it follows, that the latter sense is intended. If it should be farther said, that the passage means, that the church of Christ should be a kingdom to continue in perpetuity for ever, this does not alter the case; for it points out the manner and means of its continuance, by the children of professors and their seed, being continued and established in the church from one generation to another.

In conformity to these prophecies, Peter declares in the above passage, that “the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.” This passage divides itself into three parts.

I. The promise is to you whom I address.

II. The promise is also to your children, whether present or absent.

III. “The promise is to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call;” whether jew or gentile, and consequently, to their children.

Whether the promise mentioned by Peter in this passage, refers to the promise of salvation, v. 20; or to the remission of sins; or to the gift of the Holy Ghost, v. 38; or to the well-known promise made to Abraham, to be a God to him, and his seed, and that in him, as his seed, all nations should be

blessed; or to the gospel dispensation by way of eminence, is not so much the subject of enquiry at present, as what is the relation the promise bears both to parents and children?

The first thing we should be desirous of ascertaining from this passage, on which the subject respecting the relation of children to the promise so much hinges, is, what the apostle meant by the declaration;—"the promise is to you, and to your children," &c.; or how he meant to be understood by those whom he was addressing, and calling to repentance, faith, &c. The persons he was now addressing, were principally jews, whose children had always stood in a relation to the church, from the days of their great progenitor, Abraham. These he particularly calls on to repent and believe the gospel; and he enforces his exhortation with an assurance, that the promise was as sure to them, and their children, under the new dispensation. He called upon them to embrace the new dispensation, because their privileges, and those of their children, would stand on the same basis, as they had done in the old dispensation, which he invited them to leave. If he did not mean this, what did he mean? In what other sense could those jews understand him? How could you? How could any parents under-

stand an address, made in such direct terms, including both themselves and children? Could any deed of gift, which was made, by one grant, to confer a favour both on parents and children in common, be expressed in more appropriate terms? Not the least separating clause—no proviso—no condition imposed on the children more than on the parents; but, as with one breath, the promise exhibited benefits both for the parents and children. We should bear in mind, that this declaration was made by Peter, under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit; that it was made in the presence of the other apostles, who were together with him, when they received their commission from Christ. And, it appears too, their joint testimony; how they understood their commission. It seems impossible, in the nature of things, that in such a vast multitude, in so populous a city, with such an influx of visitors at this season, called together on such a sudden emergency; that there should be no women and children, and even infants among them. And if so, by what rule were they excluded? we would ask, was it from the promise, which was to them and their children? And if the testamentary grants are their's, then every confirmation and sealing of them in their behalf, is their's also; of which nature is

baptism ; and the grant, and the seals, must not be separated.

The phrase, “ to you and to your children,” evidently intends parents, and children of various ages ; not excluding infants. This will appear if we consider Peter’s declaration, in its resemblance to the promise made to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 7. “ And God said unto Abraham, I will establish my covenant with thee, to be a God unto thee, and unto thy seed after thee. And Peter’s, Acts ii. 39. “ The promise is unto you, and to your children.”

The resemblance in the phraseology of these two passages, is remarkably striking. In the one, “ to thee, and to thy seed ;” in the other, “ to you, and to your children.”

The analogy of these two passages is also equally striking ; for as the phrase, “ to thee,” and “ to you,” must mean the parents ; so the phrases, “ to thy seed,” and “ to your children,” must mean their offspring.

Another striking resemblance is this, that both the promises are connected with an initiatory ordnance, at the commencement of a new dispensation, to which the promises have special reference. Another analogy is remarkably striking ; namely, both these ordinances were used in the churches as universal rites, and seals of the same exhibited

blessing; even, the righteousness of faith: “the promise is to you and to your children, under their respective dispensations. Under the former, both parents and children were included; not only in the promise, but in the initiatory seal also; and the seal was administered to the children in the earliest infancy. It appears equally clear, that as children are included in the succeeding dispensations, so they are as certainly entitled to the seal, as they are to the promise; and for this obvious reason, that the covenant and seal, must not be separated.

It is in vain for any one to say, that the term children, means posterity, in order to evade this conclusion; certainly it does—it means lineal descent; and is not an infant of a day, as much so, as a man of fifty; for it means children in every stage of life. We would further remark, that the promise did not only include those parents, and children that were present, but that it comprehended adults, and children wherever it comes.

The apostle designates the persons to whom the promise applies, by those who were present, and by those who were absent. These he distinguishes two ways. “All that are afar off;” “as many as the Lord our God shall call;” far, or near. To each

of these classes, he applies the promise in our text. To those present, "the promise is to you, and to your children." To those absent." To as many as the Lord our God shall call, "the promise is to you, and to your children." Let the promise come where it may, or to whomsoever, far or near, jew or gentile, male or female, bond or free;—the promise is to them and their children.

The promise, also, in its very nature and essence, includes both parents and children; both parties being included as subjects of the promise; so that we cannot take one part away without violating the very essence of the promise; for it is essential to the promise, that "it is to you;" and it is equally essential to it, that "it is to your children." We have no more right to say, that the promise is to you, and not to your children, than we have to say, it is to your children and not to you; for it was God's design, that the promise should be as truly for the benefit of their children, as themselves; and for this reason, both are included in the promise.

The objection is raised against the above interpretation, that the term "called" must be taken in a restrictive sense; and can only refer to those children, who at any future period might be called into a personal pro-

fession of faith in Christ ; and, therefore, infants as such, are from the nature of the case, altogether excluded. This objection to superficial, and prejudiced minds, may appear very plausible ; but, by a little attention, it will appear rotten at its foundation. For we may ask, from what are they excluded ? Not from the promise, surely ; and if not from the promise, what right have they to be excluded from the confirming seal ?

This excluding objection, does not comport with the apostle's design, in forming so close and inseparable a connexion, of the children with their parents ; and making the former as much the objects of the promise, as the latter. Was it not, in fact, intended to confirm the minds of the parents in the principle, that the children stood exactly on the same ground, in relation to the promises, and their privileges, as they had done under the former dispensation ? If this was not his meaning, for what reason could he mention the children in such close connexion with their parents, in respect to the promise ? We should be very careful to keep in view an important distinction, on this part of the subject. We should be careful to keep distinct, God's call, and man's compliance with it ; nor should we confound the call of the gospel, with God's secret and

efficacious drawing of the soul to himself; as this would be to confound the call with its effects.

God's call is by the ministry of reconciliation; by which he calls man to repentance, and faith; but what makes this call effectual, is the influences of the Holy Spirit on the minds of those who are called.

This belongs to a very different dispensation; that of the spirit. This latter idea, seems out of the present question, being excluded by the nature of the subject; and to understand the proper force of the term, we must seek the apostle's meaning in the external call of the gospel. Thus, many are called, but few are chosen. In reference to this call of the gospel, we should remember, that a person, family, nation, or people, are no sooner addressed, or evangelized by the gospel call, or ministry, than we can assure them that the promise is objectively proposed to them, and to their's. If they reject the call, they have no right to the promise; and if they reject the promise, they have no right to the seal. Besides, individuals, families, tribes, and nations, are proselyted into the visible church of God by the gospel call; and are not children, and even infants, capable of being proselyted with their parents, as parts of themselves?

As members of families, and as making a very considerable part of those nations that may be joined to the Lord? And if so, are they not to be reckoned among the called; or what is to exclude them?

In attending to his call, external compliance with a prescribed rite, is sufficient to secure whatsoever is given of an external nature in the promise, grant, or covenant; and baptism being the initiatory seal, by compliance therewith, it is secured. Thus the apostles, as soon as any persons, professed faith in Christ, baptized them with their houses or families. But it requires a spiritual and internal compliance, to secure to us, whatever in the covenant, or promise, is of an internal and spiritual nature; bearing this obvious distinction in mind, it will prevent confusion, and the confounding, as to the rule of application, things which are distinct.

If it should be farther objected; that the promise was to all who were addressed, who were capable of repentance: I answer, all who were capable of repentance were called to repent; and all who were capable of participating the blessings given in the promise, or divine grant, with its seal, were included; or for what reason were the children included with their parents in the

promise? And no one will deny, or can deny, that infants are capable of bequeathments and grants in their favour, and consequently, the sealing of them.

Besides, the apostle addressed those who were already called, for "they were pricked in their hearts," &c. but he extends the promise beyond them, even to their children. Now if the apostle extends the promise beyond the called in the first clause, by the same rule, we must extend it beyond the called in the second clause; even to their children, so that the objection appears nothing more than an evasion.

When a positive institute is connected with a promise, all who are contained, or included in the promise, are entitled to the ordinance or confirming seal. This principle runs through all the former dispensations of true religion, especially that of circumcision, and the analogy is self-evident, and remarkably striking, as Gen. xvii. 7-10—and Acts ii. 28-29.

"To thee and thy seed."

"To you and to your children."

In taking these passages in their connexion together, it is particularly observable, that the parents and children are not only united in each promise, exactly in the same way, but that the promise in both cases is

connected with an initiatory ordinance ; and in both places, the ordinance is made to result from the promise, and the one is set down as a reason for the other, that in Gen. xvii. 9. "Thou shalt keep my covenant," therefore, or because God had given him a promise. That in Acts ii. 28. "Repent, and let every one of yours be baptized," for, or because, the promise is to you and your children. From the above statement, it plainly appears, that when parents and children are relatively united in the same promise ; and that promise is connected with a religious institute ; that which gives each party a right to the promise, gives them the same right to the ordinance. Hence, as parents and children are connected with, and are united in, the promise, and the promise is united with the ordinance ; the children's right to the ordinance, stands exactly on the same footing with that of their parents ; and this conclusion is undeniable, when taken in connexion with former dispensations.

For if we were to ask, who were to be circumcised ? the reply is, those to whom the promise was made. If we ask again, who are to be baptized ? the reply is, those to whom the promise is made. But to whom is the promise made ? to you, and to your

children, adults and infants. So that we see that to whomsoever the promise is made; the broad seal of heaven is to be affixed to them; to certify both to parents and children the infallibility of the promise, to all who are included in it; and who shall, at some future time, embrace the promise, and not reject it through unbelief.

We would finally remark, that the promise or gospel grant, is not a blessing conferred in consequence of effectual calling; but in subserviency to it: for the promise is the warrant for our access to God, and an encouragement to repentance, faith, &c. and not a blessing subsequent. Other persons, families, and nations, are called, that they may comply; and the promise with its seal, are given as the inducement.

THE PRACTICE OF THE BAPTISM OF HOUSES OR FAMILIES.

IN a precept or practice referring to the baptism of Children, we may expect to find

them either expressed, or naturally implied, as in company with their parent or parents, in the terms used, with such particulars, as demonstrate their participation in the ordinance.

The term for house in the Greek, is *oikos*,* and agrees exactly with the usage of the English term. This term, when applied to persons, has a two-fold meaning.

I. A continued line of descent of many generations, as the house of Israel, the house of David, &c. that is, the nearest line that can be drawn by consanguinity, or blood to Israel, or David.

II. It also signifies a family living at the same time, and usually dwelling under one roof.

With the addition of another syllable, it changes its application, as household, (Greek *oikios*), and now it means children, and the attendants of a family, the servants of various kinds; whoever belongs to the house, by marriage, or adoption, may ingraft a member of the household into the house, or family; but these are incidental, not natural privileges.

It should here be observed, that our trans-

* The author has adopted the Greek term, from the late Mr. Taylor's letters to the deacon of a baptist church, and depends on his veracity for its correctness.

lators use the terms house and household interchangeably; though the scriptures, in the original, always preserve the distinction. This has been one of the greatest causes of confusion, on the subject of baptism: see 2 Tim. i. 16, "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus," &c. iv. 19, "The household of Onesiphorus." This is calculated to mislead. It must at once strike every one, that the term house, when used to signify a building, can have no relation to the baptism of persons; nor can it, when applied to a series of succeeding generations. The term naturally restricts itself to the signification above, to that of a family, living at the same time, and usually under the same roof; and had the term house, been at first translated family, instead of house, no error on this point could have arisen on the subject of baptism.

The term house, when referring to a family, naturally includes children, and children too, in every stage of life, down to the infant of a day old. A man and his wife are no family. When a young woman is advanced in a state of pregnancy, she is said to be in the family way. When a living child is born to a man, it is said, he has a family; if he has two or three children, he has a small family; if double that number, it is a large

family, so that there can be no family, where there are no children. Family implies children. Families are composed of children in every stage of life.

It is self-evident, that the term house, in the Old and New Testament, means children. Gen. vii. 1, "And the Lord said unto Noah, come thou and all thy house into the ark." Heb. ii. 7. "By faith, Noah being warned of God, prepared an ark for the saving of his house." The above passages emphatically prove two things.

I. That the term house, when used metaphorically, both by the Old and New Testament writers, means family.

II. That it means family, or children, exclusive of the servants, or the household.

While the foregoing passages prove the analogy of the term "house," both in the Old and New Testament, the following will prove, that the term does not only include children in advanced age, but also minors, and even infants; consult the following passages—1 Tim. iii. 4. The qualifications of a bishop, he should be one, "who ruleth well his own house, (family), having his children in subjection with all gravity." v. 12, "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children, and their own houses (families) well.

Chap. v. 14, "I will, therefore, that the younger women marry, bear children, guide* the house." No words could be more definitive than these. First, marry. Second, bear children. Third, guide their offspring.

The bishops and deacons were to rule their own houses, or families; nothing can be more a man's own, than the children of his own body; nor could these children be adults, but young children under the father's direction, command, and control, else the term rule, would not properly apply. The apostle also, changes the term; the mother is to guide, or take care of the infant; the father to rule the family; how natural this! what order!

Having thus fully established the fact, that the term house, in the above sense, means family, including infants and children in every stage of life; we shall proceed next, to point out those families, which are mentioned as christian, in the New Testament; and the relation they bear to the subject of baptism.

I. The first instance that presents itself to our consideration, is Cornelius, Acts x. 2, "Cornelius was a just man, and one that

* The third term refers to that guidance, care, and assiduity, which mothers exercise with such lively anxiety for their infant family; nor can foster children be intended as the apostle speaks of child-bearing.

feared God, with all his house." xi. 14, "Send for Peter, who shall tell thee words, whereby thou, and all thy house shall be saved," read the connexion.

I. When the word "all," or "whole" are used in connexion with house, or family, it means many, in lesser numbers, Matt. xiii. 46. So that we may fairly conclude, that Cornelius's family was a numerous one; and consequently, some were much younger than others, and for ought we know, infants.

II. It is evident, that the promise was made, in the first instance, to Cornelius and his numerous family. "He shall tell thee words, whereby thou, and all thy house," or numerous family, "shall be saved." For the promise is to you, and your children; and consequently imports your call and theirs, to a participation of its blessings.

III. Though the promise of salvation was, in the first place, made expressly to Cornelius, and his numerous family; yet, his heart was too large to wish to confine the promised blessing to which they were to be called, and invited by Peter's ministry, to himself or to them: he therefore called together his near kinsmen, and friends on the interesting occasion. v. 24.

IV. It is natural to suppose, that the pious soldier, and the two domestics of Cor-

nelius's household, who went for Peter, were among the numerous assembly on whom the Holy Spirit fell, and were baptized with the rest; but that they were not of his family, though consecrated, and baptized with their master, is perfectly evident; the history marks the distinction. v. 2-7.

V. It appears, that the assembly baptized at Cornelius's, were a kind of epitome, or representative of the future gentile church; and, therefore, contained individuals of every description;—parents and children, young and old, rich and poor, masters and servants, natives and foreigners.

VI. It may be objected, that though from the history it may be inferred, that Cornelius's family were baptized; yet, it does not prove, that they were baptized on the faith of their father; as the Holy Ghost is said to have fallen on all who were present; and, therefore, from what can be proved to the contrary, they were baptized on their own faith. This point we will not contend for in the present case; we will even admit it to be doubtful; and, therefore, must look to some other instance, in confirmation of the principle; we therefore, proceed.

II. To the case of Lydia, “whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul; and

she was baptized, and her household." Acts xvi. 14-15.

I. In this history, it is self evident, that the family of Lydia were baptized with their mother.

II. That they were baptized, expressly on the credit, and in the right of their mother's faith; and it is thus spoken of, without any expression of surprise, as connected with her own baptism;—as a matter of course, "and when she was baptized, and her family."

III. The next case, in order, is that of the gaoler. Acts xvi. 29-34. And the gaoler fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house, or family. "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, and all his, straightway."

I. The first thing which strikes us in this history is this, namely, that the gaoler, in his terror, only enquired for his own salvation; but Paul and Silas, in their answer, include his house, or family.

II. This gaoler was one of those gentile sinners, to whom the gospel call was now

sent; and the promise of salvation was no sooner proposed to him, than his family are included, in the very same sentence, in which it is made to him; and that, too, even before they could have been addressed personally on the subject; and this gives a fair explanation of Peter's meaning. Acts. ii. 39. Where he says, "the promise is to you, and your children; and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

Could any coincidence of circumstances more completely prove the fact, that Peter's meaning was, that the children of those gentiles, who were called to believe the gospel, stood on the same footing, and were entitled to the same external privileges, as the Jewish children were?

III. Like Cornelius, he brought all in his power under the word; all that were in his house, v. 32; attendants and prisoners, to hear the word; yet, only his own family accompanied him in his own baptism; and here it is spoken of with the same ease, and coolness, as that of Lydia's, as the ordinary course of events; that the children should accompany their parent, or parents, in their baptism. The family appears, also, to have been more numerous than that of Lydia's; by the word *all* being used. He rejoiced

with, or over, all his numerous family, believing in God ; so that if any of his attendants, or prisoners, believed, they were baptized distinctly from the gaoler, and his family. Why this distinction, if not to maintain the principle of family baptism ?

The church at Philippi, however small at its commencement, affords two families that were baptized, Lydia's, and the gaoler's ; how many others, as families, underwent the rite, we cannot say.

It is further worthy our notice, that the head of one of these baptized families, was the mother, and the other was the father. This is quite conformable to what the apostle says, 1 Cor. vii. 14. " The unbelieving husband, is sanctified by the wife ; and the unbelieving wife, is sanctified by the husband : else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." Also, Rom. xi. 16. For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy : and if the root be holy, so are the branches.*

* The gaoler, it is certain, became one of the Philippian brethren ; and, certainly, it is reasonable to think, that he would not lose the last opportunity, of attending the consolatory exhortation of Paul at Lydia's, with others ; and bid his spiritual fathers farewell. This shews the blindness, folly, or wicked design, of making these brethren to consist exclusively of Lydia's family ; and we may further ask, if they were adults

IV. The next case, in order, is that of Crispus. Acts xviii. 8. "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogues, believed on the Lord, with all his house: and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized.

I. In these concise words it is evident, there are some particulars to be supplied, and some to be taken for granted.

The family of Crispus is said to believe, but is not distinctly declared, to have been baptized; though it may be fairly implied. To leave this believing family unbaptized, would be to cut up believers' baptism by the very roots. We learn the baptism of Crispus from another quarter; this we should never have known; especially who baptized him; but for the unhappy disputes at Corinth. There were many others who had families at Corinth, besides Crispus; but how many others, as families, were baptized we cannot say. The apostle informs us, that he baptized one other family, namely, Stephanas. 1 Cor. i. 16. "And I baptized, also, the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other." But that other ministers had baptized others, not only as individuals, but as families, appears fairly

how came they to be omitted in the apostles salutation, to this church?

implied ; not only in the passage we have selected, but by the different parties at Corinth ; who appear to have arranged themselves, under the names of those by whom they had been baptized. 1 Cor. i. 12-13.

V. There are three other families, mentioned by the apostle, as christian ; Onesiphorus. 2Tim. i. 16-18, iv. 19. Aristobulus, and Narcissus. Rom. xvi. 10-11. These are described as being in Christ ; or being in relation to him.

It is true, the word *oikois* does not occur in the two last sentences ; yet, the phrase evidently implies family ; and all translators have hitherto so rendered it. The fact seems to be this, that Aristobulus, at this time, was preaching the gospel in Britain. (Taylor's Letters.) And Narcissus might, also, be from home ; or even dead, for what we know ; and their families might not dwell in one house, (*oikos* ;) which might make the term inapplicable ; and, also, be the reason why their families were not addressed.

From the above induction, it appears, that there are eight families, distinctly marked as christian, in the New Testament. Now if we admit, that the family of Crispus was baptized, because we find it registered as believing ; then we must admit the same of all other families marked as christian ;

though they are not expressly described as baptized. Here those who refuse to admit what we are pleading for, may take their choice, and take the consequences of either side to themselves.

Having noticed those families expressly in the New Testament, as Christian, let us now take a review of the evidence.

I. Christian families marked as baptized.

1. That of Cornelius.
2. Lydia.
3. The Gaoler.
4. Stephanas.

II. Christian families whose baptism is not mentioned.

5. Crispus.
6. Onesiphorus.

III. Christian families whose baptism is not marked, and who are not expressed by the usual terms *oikos*, or family.

7. Aristobulus.
8. Narcissus.

Eight Christian families, therefore, baptized.

Is there any other case besides that of baptism, in which you would take eight families at a hazard, and deny the existence of young children in them. Take eight families at a venture, in the street above or below your own house, or above or below your own

pew, in your place of worship ; or any where else you please, it matters not where. Will there not be found more than one infant in this number of families ? It should likewise be constantly kept in mind, that absolute infancy, or even infancy at all, is by no means necessary to prove the point ; as we may without danger, take into the account, children, at least, that are two or three years old, if not seven or eight, or even older, while under their parent's authority, but we do not insist upon this here.

Now let us suppose, for the sake of illustration, that one-half of these families consisted of four children, and the other of eight ; the average is six, then the number of children is forty-eight. Now calculate the chances, that in forty-eight children, there should not be one infant among them, or at least, one under two or three years of age ; the chances are hundreds of thousands to one against the supposition, that there are not any under that age. Nor are we to conceive that these four families mentioned as baptized, were the only families which enjoyed this privilege ; these could be only a specimen of hundreds and thousands of families, which in the first propagation of the gospel, enjoyed, as families, the same blessed privilege.

PART SECOND.

THE MODE OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

IN treating on the mode of christian baptism, it is necessary to premise the following things.

I. The inquiry is not so much, what may be considered the original abstract meaning of the word baptize, or baptism, as what is the scriptural legislative, legal, ceremonial, or ritual sense of the word.

II. Neither is the inquiry, whether a person, or any community of persons, prefer one mode of baptism to another; either dipping, pouring, or sprinkling; but whether they insist upon any one mode, as essential to the ordinance, to the exclusion of all others.

III. Those who deny family baptism, usually insist, that christian baptism, is neither more nor less, than a total immersion of the whole body, in, or under the water,

in the name of the Father, of the Son, and Holy Ghost ; while those who held with family baptism, in general, think that sprinkling, or pouring, are equally proper scriptural modes ; as they do not believe that the scripture has specified any one mode, to the exclusion of all others : and that the essence of the ordinance, does not consist in the mode of application ; but in the subject having the element religiously applied in the name of the Holy Trinity, into which the subject is baptized.

IV. It should also be clearly understood, that the term immersion, used indefinitely, is a very improper term ; as a person is immersed, who stands in water only on his toes, or up to his knees. The term, therefore, conveys a false idea of the action, and the word plunge, is the most proper to express the action ; but the term plunge, would not apply to some passages of scripture, it is, therefore, cautiously avoided, by those who make the plunging of the entire body under water, essential to the ordinance.

V. It may be observed also, that there is not any specific word in the English language, whether pouring, sprinkling, plunging, dipping, or immersion, that seems fully to convey the import of the words baptize and baptism ; but that some generic terms, more

clearly and more fully express the scriptural and ritual meaning of it ; such as purification, dedication, consecration, separation, initiation, &c. This will appear more clear, if we try the experiment by any one of these generic terms, as for instance, let us try the words purify and purification, Matt. iii. 11, "I purify (plunge) with water, but he shall purify (plunge) with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." xx. 22, "Are ye able to be purified with the purification I am purified with ; plunged with the plunging I am plunged with." This shews that the generic term is the most proper to express the action.*

The scriptural use of the terms baptize and baptism.

It is premised in the above preliminary remarks, that the term immersion, used indefinitely, is a very improper term to express the action, of what is called immersion baptism ; as a man is immersed who stands on his toes, or up to his knees in water, as truly as he, over whose head the water flows. If the term then be so indeterminate, it would be chasing an ignis fatuus to follow it, when facts are in question ; it illudes the test of scripture, reason, and common sense. The specific English term, for putting the whole

* Taylor's letters to a deacon of a baptist church.

body under water, is to plunge it:—now mark the proposition—christian baptism, is neither more nor less, than plunging the whole body under water, in the name of the Father, &c. This affords a precise idea; an idea, that may be easily examined.

It at once conveys the proper nature of the action to the mind, and ought to be used, whenever the action of baptism is represented by putting the whole body under water. But if it be cautiously avoided, and the more equivocal term immersion designedly substituted in its place, there is reason to suspect, that its advocates have a conviction, that the term to plunge, would not make sense of some passages of scripture, where the term baptism is used; and consequently, would sap the foundation of the principle contended for, viz. that christian baptism, is nothing more nor less, than plunging the whole body under water.

Now the question that arises from the above remark, is this; does the original Greek word baptism, wherever it occurs in scripture, denote plunging. In the New Testament, the verb bapto occurs thrice.*

Luke xvi. 24, “Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger.” } That he may plunge the tip of his finger.

* Taylor's Letters.

John xiii. 26, "He to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it." } A sop, when I have plunged it.

Rev. xix. 13, "His name was called the Word of God; he was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood." } Clothed in a vesture plunged in blood.

The compound word embapto, is also used thrice.

Matt. xxvi. 23, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish." } He that plungeth his hand with me in the dish.

Mark xiv. 20, "One of the twelve that dippeth with me in the dish." } One of the twelve that plunges with me in the dish.

John xiii. 26, "He to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it; and when he had dipped the sop." } He to whom I shall give the sop when I have plunged it, & when he had plunged it.

The noun baptisimos, occurs four times.

Mark vii. 4-8, "The washing of cups and pots, and brazen vessels, and tables." } The plunging of cups and pots, and brazen vessels, and tables.

Heb. vi. 2, "The foundation: the doctrine of baptisms." } The doctrine of plungings.

Heb. ix. 10, "Services in meats and drinks, and divers washings." } Divers plungings.

In reviewing these passages, surely no one will dispute, that they imply different modes of performing that action, which the sacred writers call baptism; and happily their order is favourable to the eliciting conclusive evidence, both from their connexion and tenor.

Whoever have seen cups and pots washed at a pump, or have washed their own face and hands there, may judge whether they were necessarily plunged. When we consider the dimensions of those tables, say from fifteen to twenty feet long, by four feet broad, and about four feet high; we may judge whether they were plunged after every meal taken upon them—convenient utensils for plunging, truly! will language tolerate the plunging the tip of the finger; can any man believe, that common decency tolerates the plunging of two hands in the same dish, at the same time; can it be believed, that christianity tolerates the notion of our Lord Jesus Christ, being clothed in a garment plunged in blood; and yet, if we admit of no other mode of baptism, these monstrous notions must be believed, and tolerated. Surely, this is straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel, with a witness. But why does the sacred writer describe the doctrine of baptisms in the plural form, as one of the foundations of christianity, if there were only one mode of baptism, that of plunging?

This question answers itself; for the same writer expressly says, that under the law, were divers kinds of baptisms. Heb. ix. 10. And by far, the greatest part of these we know, were not *plungings*.

The word baptism, therefore, cannot possibly be restricted to plunging, but is used in scripture, in reference to various *things*, in senses distinct from it; it becomes us, therefore, to examine its import, in reference to persons.

III.

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST.

IN reverting to the baptism of the Holy Ghost, we may notice, that it was the subject of John the baptist's repeated prediction. Matt. iii. 11: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." It was also the subject of our Lord's repeated prediction. Luke xxiv. 49: "I will send the promise of my father upon you:—ye shall be endowed with power from on high. Acts i. 5: "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence."

Acts ii. 2-4: "And suddenly there came from heaven ;—and appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." The same occurred in the case of Cornelius; Peter says, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Here Peter would specify the exact resemblance between the baptism of the Holy Ghost, as received by Cornelius, and that of the apostles, at the day of pentecost. Acts xi. 15. He repeats the same declaration a great while after. Acts xv. 8: "Giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us, putting no difference."

This baptism of the Holy Ghost, was not metaphorical, or figurative. It was real and indisputable; visible to the senses. It was seen by John the baptist; by the apostles on the day of pentecost; by Peter, and the brethren, at the house of Cornelius. It is called cloven tongues of fire. Not only was this baptism administered, by a mode distinct from plunging; but by one directly opposed to it, and inconsistent with it; indeed, the administration of *this* baptism by plunging, was impossible.

When the precise meaning of a word or term is the subject of dispute, and there exists a difference of opinion; so that two

persons understand such word or term, as conveying a meaning directly contrary to each other; it is of advantage to produce those words which are synonymous, and convey the same meaning which the Holy Spirit has been pleased to employ, to fix the meaning of such term or word. This is the subject of investigation; here we should depend on the New Testament writers alone, who were under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and were his instruments in explaining “spiritual *things*,” by “spiritual *words*.”

This process will prove a crucible, that will detect false propositions, and confute them; or like the *fan*, it will drive away the chaff, and leave the grain open to a minute inspection of its quality.

Let us try it in the case before us, and then examine its results. The following passages will bring into comparative view, the word synonymous with the term baptism.

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|---|
| 1. Sending
down. | { | <p>Luke xxiv. 49: “And, behold, I will send the promise of my Father upon you.”</p> <p>1 Peter, i. 12: “With the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.”</p> |
|---------------------|---|---|

2. Falling. { Acts viii. 15-16: "Who, when they [Peter and John] were come down [to Samaria] prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: for as yet, he was fallen on none of them." x. 44: "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on them which heard the word." ii. 15.
3. Shedding. { Acts ii. 33: "Having received of the Father, the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." Titus iii. 5-6: "And renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly."
4. Pouring. { Acts x. 45: "Because, that on the gentiles also, was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost."
5. Descending, sitting, or abiding. { John i. 32: "And John bear record, saying; I saw the spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him—sat or rested on him."

6. Anointing. { Acts x. 37-38 : "After the baptism which John preached : how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power."
7. Filling. { Acts ix. 17 : "And filled with the Holy Ghost."
8. Sealing. { Eph. i. 13 : "In whom also, after ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."
9. Breathing. { John xx. 22 : "He breathed on them, and said unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost."

In taking a review of the above synonymous words, does any one of them, if taken separately, or do the whole, if taken together, convey to the mind the idea of plunging ; or even, so much as approach to it ? Yet they all refer to baptism. The prediction was, that the apostles should be baptized with the Holy Ghost ; the fulfilment is thus noticed, "the Holy Ghost was poured out upon them.

It will be admitted, or at least supposed by all, that the most complete instance of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, is given in the baptism of Christ, and that beyond all possibility of doubt, there was no *plunging*,

or anything that resembled *plunging* ; although so many terms are employed in the relation of the fact, as descending, pouring, anointing, &c.

From this, it must appear, even to a demonstration, that the baptism of the Holy Ghost was conferred, by the baptismal element (if I may so speak) descending on the person, and not by the person being plunged into the baptismal element.

IV.

BAPTISM BY WATER.

AS the baptism of the Holy Ghost, is uniformly described, by the baptismal element descending on the subject ; our next enquiry must be, whether there are any instances recorded, of the element descending in water baptism, and if such instances occur, we must understand them in their literal senses ; or else, we render one part of the word of God, repugnant to the other.

In 1 Cor. x. 2 : Israel is said to be baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea :

that is, the whole nation, men, women, and children, were all introduced into the Mosaic dispensation, under the tuition and discipline of Moses, who was a type of Christ, by baptism. Heb. iii. 2.

Here it is worthy of remark, that the history declares, that they went through the sea on dry land, that the cloud was over them, so they were under it; therefore, the water, which must have been the baptismal element, must have descended on them from above, in the form of dew or rain; otherwise, they could not have been said, to be in that cloud, which was before described to have been over them. This fact may be farther illustrated in the case of Nebuchadnezer, who was said to be wet, or baptized, with the dew of heaven, which descended upon him.

Hence, it appears, that when water is employed as the baptismal element, the term *descending*, bears the same import in regard to it; which it bears when employed to describe the pouring down, pouring out, or shedding forth of the Holy Ghost.

As all the emblematic terms employed, in reference to the baptism of the Holy Ghost imply descending from above, or from heaven, so a scriptural view of baptism by water, will lead to the same conclusion; that

the element should be applied to the subject, and should be understood to be an effusion, pouring down, or sprinkling, and never as an immersion or plunging.

That this is the scriptural view of the mode of baptism by water, as well as of baptism by the Holy Spirit, will appear more clear and certain ; if we regard the reference that is made from the one to the other, and the analogy that is established between them. Matt. iii. 11 : John says, " I, indeed, baptize you with water (not in water) unto repentance ; but he that cometh after me, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Christ confirmed and fulfilled this promise to his apostles. Acts i. 5 : " John truly baptized with water ; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." The mode of this baptism is described in v. 8 : " And ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you." And the fact of its accomplishment, is recorded Acts ii. 3 : " And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." Thus John and Christ agreed in the analogy, which their baptisms bare to each other, as to the mode. John applied water to the body, or some part of it, as the ritual sign ; and Christ, by sending down the Holy Spirit,

and causing it to rest upon them, applied the blessing signified.

That this was the actual mode of John's baptism, will be farther proved, if we turn to Acts x. 44-47: "And while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell upon all of them which heard the word; and they of the circumcision were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the gentiles also was poured out the Holy Ghost." v. 47: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized, in the name of the Lord:" by having water poured out upon them, as corresponding to the manner, by which the Holy Ghost was poured out upon them.

In Acts xi. 15-16: When Peter rehearsed this circumstance, he made the following comment upon it. "Then remembered I the words of the Lord, how that he said, John, indeed, baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost."

From the above passage, it may be remarked, that what is called "falling upon, and pouring out of the Holy Ghost, chap. x. 45, is expressly called baptism in chap. xi. 16. The same term is applied both to the baptism of water, and to the baptism to

the Holy Ghost ; and as the baptism of the Holy Ghost is here declared to be by pouring out, or letting fall, his influence on the subject ; will any one be prepared to assert, that the baptism with water, as practised by the apostles, was not performed in the same manner, by pouring out, or letting fall water on the subject ?

Another circumstance in the history, is the remarkable manner in which Peter was struck at the exact resemblance there was between this baptism of the Holy Ghost, and the baptism of John. How could the apostle, after so long a time, have been so strongly impressed, if the resemblance were not remarkably striking ? If it should be asked, in what did this resemblance consist ? The answer is, in what the apostle saw. And what did he see ? He saw the *pouring down* of the Holy Ghost ; for this is the term expressly used, and what is called pouring down, in Acts x. 45, is expressly called baptism, in Acts xi. 16.

Would the baptism of the Holy Ghost at the house of Cornelius, have carried back the recollection of Peter, so instantaneously, to John's baptism, had there been no resemblance between the two baptisms, as to the mode of applying the element.

That this was what Peter referred to, will

appear more plainly, if we try the passage by the use of the word plunge, and the synonyms above. John plunged, &c. in water; but ye shall be plunged, immersed, dipped in the Holy Ghost. What an abuse of language, and of principle too! Try the synonyms. The Holy Ghost shall be poured upon you, let fall upon you, shed upon you, &c. as John poured water, shed water, let fall water upon you. In this, there is nothing offensive, or contrary to fact, common sense, the analogy of faith, or even of grammar. When the term anointing is used, the mode is preserved, though the element is changed.

We may further enquire, is it not absurd in the highest degree, to suppose, that the same term which is used to represent the application both of the sign and of the thing signified, should be understood to mean two modes of application diametrically opposite: in the former case, to mean being plunged into the element; and in the latter, to have the element poured down.

Is it possible to believe, that terms intended to express the signs and antisigns, or types and antitypes, of each other, should, in their application, be understood in direct opposition to each other. That while in the antitype, or antisign, the Holy Spirit is positively declared to be poured out, or let

fall from above, on the subject; that the right application of water in the sign, must be by plunging the subject into it, until the element rises over him, and overwhelms him, or swallows him up. He that can believe this, let him believe it!

Those, therefore, who deny that pouring, or letting water fall on the subject, is baptism; and allege, that nothing less than a total immersion of the whole body under water, is the scriptural mode of performing the ordinance, must be prepared to disprove this historical fact, as well as those other facts, that have been previously noticed. This they must do, not by advancing reasons or suppositions, drawn from other grounds and considerations, but by fully meeting the fact itself. If, however, they cannot disprove this fact; then fundamental principles, that absolute and total immersion, or plunging, is essential to baptism by water; falls at once to the ground.

V.

A REVIEW OF THE PRINCIPAL GROUNDS AND REASONS PRODUCED IN SUPPORT OF BAPTISM, BY TOTAL IMMERSION.

THOSE who insist, that a total immersion

of the body under water, is essential to water baptism, lay the principal stress of their reasoning on the terms going down into, and coming up out of the water; on John's baptizing in the river Jordan, and at Enon, because there was much water: on the figure of being buried with Christ by baptism. That the term baptism, in its original and primary signification, means to dip a thing under water. As it regards the terms, "going down into," and "coming up out of the water;" even allowing them all the weight in the scale of evidence, which they can possess to serve the system they are brought forward to support; yet, they can afford no certain evidence to prove, that a single individual, of the vast multitudes that were baptized by John, or by Christ's apostles, was ever plunged under water. That any one ever was so plunged by either, rests on the other hand the inference, that no one ever was plunged under water, is by far the most probable, and that for the following plain reasons:—

We should bear in mind, that the acts of going down into, and coming up out of the water, are distinct, and separate from baptism; they are actions performed previous to, and subsequent on the act of baptism itself; so that they afford no certain proof, whether

the act of baptism was performed either by sprinkling, pouring, or dipping. It is also a fact, generally admitted, that the Greek particles here used, which correspond with the English prepositions, into, and out of, are often used to signify, to, from, by, near, at, towards, &c. so that nothing can be positively decided on the subject by them.

One circumstance we should mark respecting these phrases, that they were never used, except when the ordinance was performed out of doors ; and the subject had to go into the place where the baptizer was stationed, and then return from it. But we hear nothing of going into, or coming out of ; nor even going to, or coming from the water, when the ordinance was performed within doors : but simply, that they and theirs, were baptized.

To make the terms, going down into, and coming up out of the water, synonymous with plunging the body under the water, imposes a false idea on the mind. But who does not see the discrepancy of this : for upon that supposition, every horse, or any other animal, that goes down into the water to drink, and comes up out of it again, by the same rule of implication, must have been dipped under the water, though he only went in up to his fetlock, or knees.

We do not find in the history, that there is so much as a single hint given, that John ever stepped one foot into the water himself, in the act of baptizing ; much less, that he stood in it from morning till night, and that too, from day to day. This he must have done, had he plunged under water the vast multitudes he baptized ; as we have no proof, that any one assisted in the work, the thing seems morally impossible. Nor does the argument against a total immersion, rest only on this ; for the baptized must have been dipped, either in their clothes, which would have endangered their health, or out of their clothes, which would have presented one of the most indecent scenes, that had ever been witnessed under the face of the sun. It is in vain to presume any thing about vestries, baptistries, and baptizing garments, as the history does not even hint at any such provisions ; though the garment of the baptizer, with its appendages, is particularly described. Matt. iii. 4.

John's baptizing at the river Jordan, and at Enon, because there was much water there, seems by implication to convey the inference, that the persons baptized must have been dipped : or else, why need it be so expressly mentioned, that there was much water there ? Ah ! why, indeed ! This is

the question. But a moment's reflection will be sufficient to shew, that too much water, would have been as fatal to total immersion, or plunging, as too little; and indeed, that a small stream with a dam made by the side, or across it, would have been much more suitable and convenient for the purpose, than a deep and rapid river. The selecting a place, or part of the country, where there was a good supply of water, was for other purposes than because a large supply of water was positively necessary for baptism, even if it be granted, that all who were baptized, were immersed. We read John iii. 22-23.

“After these things, came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea, and there he tarried with them, and baptized; and John also was baptizing in Enon, near to Salem, because there was much water there; and they came, and were baptized,” some by John, and some by Christ, through his disciples, whom he had sanctioned, and superintended on the occasion. The history is not introduced so much for the purpose of noticing John's baptism, as that of Christ, and the circumstances which arose out of it, viz. the question which was raised respecting the design of John's baptism, v. 25; the jealousy excited by the great extent of

Christ's baptism, and the preference that was given to it, v. 26; the opportunity it gave John of renewing his testimony concerning Christ, (which was probably the last he publicly bore;) and the satisfaction he expressed in receding to give place to him, "He must increase, but I must decrease:" v. 27-30.

The term much water, is usually understood in this passage, to mean many streams, or springs of water. The historian, in recording that the baptisms of Christ, and of John, were practised at the same time, and in the same neighbourhood, seems intent to inform us, that there were not only many springs, or streams, at Enon, but that there were many springs, or streams, in all that part of the country.

It is probable, that Christ and his disciples, were baptizing on the banks of the Jordan; and John also, at the same time, was baptizing at Enon, because there were many springs of water in all that part of the country. There is nothing in this fact, to prove immersion, it has mere inference, with nothing better than a mere supposition to support it. The historian's design appears to be, to give a plain reason, why two large companies should be attracted to the same neighbourhood, where they might be, at the same time, engaged, without interfering with each other

in making the same religious use of water ; as well as obtain a sufficient supply, both for themselves, and their cattle to drink. The latter reason, indeed, will appear to be much more probable and important, than the former, when we consider the multitudes that attended from day to day, by whatever mode baptism was performed. This shews the futility of all the noise and wrangling that this passage has occasioned, in the arguments which have been deduced from it, to establish, or confute immersion baptism.

One great and principle reason, why baptism has been supposed to imply immersion, is the expression used Rom. vi. 4, and Col. ii. 12: “Buried with Christ by baptism, and in baptism ;” “and also to be risen with him, in his resurrection.” Both these passages seem to have the same import, and the question is, had the apostle any reference to the mode of baptism at all, in these verses, or had he not ; if he had, what was the nature of that reference. Those who hold with “immersion baptism,” suppose he had ; but this is only a supposition, and affords no direct proof, that he had any reference at all to the mode of baptism.

The apostle, in these passages, is not treating of the subject of baptism, but is enforcing the necessity of a conformity to

Christ, in those who had been baptized into a profession of faith, in his death and resurrection. He enjoins them, as baptized, and not as unbaptized persons; to put off the old life of sin, and to seek a conformity to Christ, in the new life of righteousness. "Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life.

The apostle is treating of the connexion between justification and sanctification, and in doing this, he makes distinct allusions to three things, to baptism, to grafting, and to crucifixion. In these there must be points of resemblance, and could we divest our minds of ignorance, inattention, and prejudice, and candidly examine them, there can be no doubt, but that they will appear natural and striking, and in perfect agreement with all other instances in the scriptures, of the application of the word baptize. It would be very extraordinary, that the term baptize, which in every other part of scripture, evidently implies the act of pouring out from *above*, should in this single instance have a contrary meaning, and imply the act of immersing in water, which is *below*.

The apostle does not in this passage, allude

to our *burial*, but to Christ's: "Buried with him by baptism into *his* death," not our own. The question is not, how *we* bury, but how Christ was buried. By burying, we usually mean the lowering a dead body into the grave, covering it with earth, and so leaving it under the ground; in this mode, there is no resemblance to the burial of Christ; in this sense, he never was interred either above, or below the surface of the earth. On a little reflection, we shall also acknowledge, that burying, includes the various operations attendant on laying out the body for final interment; and it is in this sense alone, that the term can be applied with propriety, to the burial of the Saviour. It is said, John xix. 40: Christ was buried, "as the manner of the Jews is to bury." It is in their manner of *burying*, and not in our own, we must seek a resemblance between burial with Christ and baptism. After the death of a person was ascertained, the first step taken, was to wash the body.

In the account given of the death of Dorcas, Acts ix. 37, this is mentioned, as having taken place as a matter of course. She was sick and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. When it was intended to anoint and embalm the body, washing was uniformly a

previous process, whether mentioned or not. Now the burial of Christ, so far as proceeded with, was “as the manner of the jews was to bury.” None surely will for a moment doubt, that this universal practice of washing the body, was one of the first attended to, with the body of the deceased and beloved Saviour.

If we consider the state his body was in, when taken down from the cross: marred with spitting and buffeting, lacerated with scourges, and covered with blood from the wounds occasioned by the thorns, the nails, and the spear; we may certainly assure ourselves, that those who had bought about a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes, would not omit the use of those stone water pots, in common use among the jews, and those towels round their waists. John xiii. 4-5. In order to cleanse the body from that state of defilement it was in, would they not begin to pour on the head, the side, the hands, the feet, and to wipe the body in its different parts, with the greatest tenderness and care with those towels, till they had thoroughly cleansed it, and so prepared it to be anointed with the spices, and wrapped up in the clean fine linen cloth provided for the purpose, by Joseph of Arimathea. John xix. 40.

This was a temporary embalmment, or

anointing, to preserve the body from corruption, till after the sabbath, at the end of which, the women intended to have completed their work. For this purpose, very early in the morning, they went to the tomb, to accomplish the embalming of the body of Jesus, had they not been prevented by his resurrection.

The next act they had to perform, was to lay him in the sepulchre. Let us proceed with the narrative. John xix. 41. "And when Joseph had taken the body, [down from the cross,] and wrapped it in a clean fine linen cloth with the spices, [after it had been washed,] and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out of the rock, and had rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, they departed."—Matt. xxvii. 59-60. "There lay the body of Jesus, therefore, because of the jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand."—John xix. 42. "And they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead."—Acts xiii. 29-30.

From the above historical narrative of the burial of Christ, the question naturally arises: How was he laid in the sepulchre? His body was not interred, by being lowered into a grave, and then covered with earth. It was not laid under ground, but carried

into a tomb, and laid on a table in the middle, or on one of the benches on the side of the apartment. The place itself, was not a tomb sunk like a cave, but what is called a sepulchre, hewn out of the side of a rock, above the surface of the ground.—Isaiah xxii. 15-16. The entrance into it was not the mouth of a pit, but it is called a *door*. Had this door been the covering of a pit, we should have been told, that Joseph had rolled a great stone upon the door; but it is said, he rolled it to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. It is not said, that the disciples went down into, and came up out of the tomb. The door was like one on the ground floor. It was a low door, which occasioned the disciples to stoop to look in; but when they went in, it was like entering into the door of a parlour, and not into a cellar. He was not interred in a grave within the tomb, for the women who saw how the body was laid, thought of no other difficulty of getting access to the body, except the stone at the door, which must be rolled away before they could enter in. This obstacle caused them some solicitude, as they were proceeding early in the morning after the sabbath was ended, to finish the burial rites, for they said, “Who shall roll away the stone for us.” These rites, however, they never finished,

being prevented by the resurrection—Mark xv. 46—xvi. 1-8.

The body of Christ was not, therefore, lowered down into a grave, and raised up out of it ; but was carried in, and Christ came forth from the tomb as a mighty conqueror : for it was impossible that the bands of death, should hold him any longer. Acts ii. 24.

In reviewing the above historical facts, attending the burial of Christ, it is asked, if there is anything stated, that the history does not mention, or suggest ? Is there any colouring, any misrepresentation, any mistake : if there be any, deduct it, and if necessary, place it on the other side of the question ; and then, may it not be asked, if there is a single point of resemblance between the burial of Christ, and the method of immersion baptism ? Is there one shadow of proof, probability, or even possibility, that the history of the one should enjoin, or so much as countenance, the practice of the other ? Is it not from the history of the case, much more natural and striking, when we think of baptism, in union with, and as figurative of the burial of Christ ; to think of the first, and universal rite of burial, that of washing the body with pure water : Heb. x. 22 ; as the actual point of resemblance, rather than

the last act of final interment, which in the case of the Saviour, never did take place? Except this washing of the Saviour's body, and the anointing that followed it, as a part of the same process, be the point of resemblance between Christ's burial, and our baptism, there seems to be none at all. On the other hand, if we were but enabled to direct our minds from the notion of immersion, to that of washing and anointing, we should then see the beauty, and striking nature of the resemblance between our baptism, and the burial of Christ.

One of the most important designs of baptism, is to represent regeneration. It is not regeneration itself, but a proper figure of it; and it points out to us the absolute necessity of it. "For except a man be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."—John iii. 5. And where regeneration actually takes place, the soul is brought into actual and personal union to Christ, and to the Father through him, by the operations of the Holy Spirit. This union, with its beneficial effects, is frequently referred to in the scriptures; both as to the sign, and to the thing signified; under the symbol of washing, cleansing, purifying, &c. These expressions, therefore, are in perfect accordance with the facts, which are recorded, relating to the

washing and anointing of the Saviour's body, at his burial; and these are the points of resemblance, to which the apostle appears to refer, when he compares baptism with the burial of Christ.

It is also worthy of notice, that the sign and the thing signified, are frequently mentioned together in the scriptures; and the one is used for the illustration of the other. **1 Cor. vi. 11:** "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God." Here our regeneration, and the blessings of justification and sanctification, are illustrated by the figure of baptism. The name in which it is administered, is the name of the Lord Jesus; "the agent by whom the thing signified, is effected; by the Spirit of our God! and the benefits connected with it, sanctification and justification."—**Titus iii. 5-6.** According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Here baptism is the sign of our regeneration, "being washed;" the thing signified is regeneration itself, "the renewing of the Holy Ghost;" the mode of application, by the spirit, being shed on the subject by perfusion,

and not by the subject being plunged into it, the spirit, by a total immersion.

From the above historical facts, attending the burial of Christ, and the reference that is made to it, in relation to baptism, there does not appear the least resemblance between it, and immersion baptism. Had not the hypothesis, or sentiment, that the burial of Christ was a final and definitive interment, early gained possession of the mind, instead of an impartial examination into the real history of the facts, respecting the Saviour's burial; we have reason to believe, that the burial of the Redeemer, would never have been set up, or even thought of, as the main pillar of those who contend for immersion baptism. This, therefore, is a fair specimen of many other cases, in which a superficial glance leads persons to conclude, that a passage is perfectly decisive on the one side of the question; while an impartial and thorough investigation into the facts of the case, proves it, in reality, decisive on the other.

The second allusion the apostle uses to illustrate our union to Christ, is planting, or grafting—Rom. vi. 5: “For if we have been planted in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” Some suppose, that the apostle in

this passage also, is adverting to the ordinance of baptism, by immersion. Here we see, likewise, that an equally erroneous idea has crept into the mind, on the subject of planting, as had done on that of the burial and resurrection of Christ. The foundation of this error, seems to be in confounding sowing with planting: but sowing and planting are performed by two distinct processes. Plants are not seeds sown on the ground, and then covered over with earth, but productions from seeds. There are two methods of planting; one is, by taking the plant from its original situation, or seed bed, where it had been raised, and transplanting it into a new situation. The other is, by taking the branch of one plant, (called by gardeners the cion,) and planting it into another stock; this is called grafting. The design of both, is to place the plants in a new situation, for the sake of improvement. When the apostle speaks of our final interment after death, he uses the similitude of sowing—1 Cor. xv. 37. But when he speaks of our union to Christ, and to the true church, he uses the similitude of planting; not, indeed, setting the plant in the ground, much less under the ground; but in the stock of another plant: “a plant of renown,” Ez. xxxiv. 39: “by the operation of grafting,” Rom. ix. 16-24.

If this, therefore, has any allusion to baptism, (as some suppose it has,) it imports that baptism is a sign and seal of our ingrafting into Christ, and the church ; and must necessarily refer to a very different act, from that of plunging.

As all figures come short of spiritual realities, so this defect may be observed here. In ordinary grafting, the plant brings its own nature with it, as an improvement on the stock ; but here the plant is removed, that it might lose its own nature, and be improved by its connexion with the stock on which it is ingrafted. For the accomplishment of this, another ingrafting is spoken of. **Jam. i. 21 :** “And receive with meekness the ingrafted word,” &c. This double ingrafting, namely, the souls being ingrafted into Christ, and the word being ingrafted into the soul ; renders the union complete, for the accomplishment of the end which is designed by the new connexion : that of bringing forth fruit unto God.

This gives an occasion for the use of another metaphor, in which no grafting takes place ; that of the vine and its branches. Christ saith, “ I am the vine, and ye are the branches,” &c. **John xv. 1 :** and in ver. 7, he illustrates this two-fold union : “If ye abide in me, and my word abide in you, ye shall ask what

ye will," &c. ; and from ver. 1-7, he points out the sanctifying effects of the union ; by distinguishing between those, who are only disciplined to him by the external sign of water baptism, (by which they were visibly disciplined to him, John iv. 1, and vi. 59-71 ;) and those who were vitally united to him, by the baptism of the spirit ; being made clean, through the word he had spoken to them ; and that water baptism was the outward sign of this washing of regeneration, by the word Eph. v. 26. In this illustration of our union to Christ, by the metaphor of the vine and its branches ; there cannot be any allusion to the mode of baptism ; nor can there be in that of grafting, by which the apostle describes the same union. The design of the Saviour and the apostle seems to be one, to shew the difference between a nominal and a vital union to the Saviour, by the effects that are produced. The apostle illustrates the subject, by baptism, planting, and crucifixion ; all to express the change that takes place, and the effects which follow our vital union to Christ.

The order of these metaphors, is in perfect harmony with his design. Baptism, which is placed first, has a respect to the foundation of our faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Saviour ; as the ground

of our hope for the remission of sins, and washing them away through his blood, &c. The second, planting, is expressive of the necessity of a personal union to Jesus, by an ingraftment into him, thus to be a partaker of the fatness of the root.—Rom. ii. 17. And the third, crucifixion, expresses the evidence of this union, in our crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. This is another instance of the consistency of scripture with itself; and this passage, instead of opposing a mode of baptism, which numerous other passages represent by sprinkling, pouring, &c. is in perfect union with them. It also seems very evident, that the apostle's principal design in the passage, was not to describe the mode of baptism, but to point out and enforce the moral designs and purposes of its appointment.

As to the etymology of the word baptize, whether it means to dip, to plunge, or simply to stain; whatever be the mode by which it may be performed, the case will not be altered. The proper enquiry is, not what is the original abstract meaning of the word, but what is the scriptural and ceremonial use of it; and it has been proved demonstrably, that the scriptural application of the word, whether in reference to water, or to the spirit, generally, if not always, in the

New Testament, represents the act by pouring down from above on the subject, and not by plunging the subject into the baptismal element. The more the scripture is investigated on this subject, the more clearly the fact will appear, and the more will it be confirmed and established. This is our polar star, or rather the luminary of our day, that will lead us in a safer path, and bring us at last, to a happier goal, than mere supposition and hypothesis.

VI.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS ON THE MODE OF BAPTISM.

AFTER Christ had continued some time in the neighbourhood of Enon, (where John also was baptizing,) with his disciples, where they both baptized great multitudes; as it was the design of God, that these two large companies should be united together, only by a gradual transference of them from John to Christ; Jesus left Judea, and departed again into Galilee, and he must needs go through Samaria. Then cometh he to a city

called Sychar : now Jacob's well was there, John iv. 1-6-7-15, by which the city was supplied with water. A woman belonging to the city, came while Christ was sitting on the side of the well, and Christ's conversation with her, led her to return to the city, and invite the inhabitants to go and hear him for themselves. And many of the Samaritans believed on him, because of the saying of the woman, which testified, he told me all that ever I did, and many more, because of his own words. Can any one doubt, but that the disciples baptized these new converts : but can any one believe, that they immersed them. If they did, there must have been such a drawing from Jacob's well, as had not taken place since the days of the patriarch.

And where was the baptistry into which the water was poured ? Were the troughs into which the water was poured for the cattle to drink, used for this purpose ? The quantity of water that would have been necessary, to have baptized nearly a whole city, would probably have been more than the well would have afforded. For the well was deep before they reached the water, so that a man could not give to himself, or his neighbour, a cup of water, without something to draw with. The inconvenience and indelicacy to

which the women must have been exposed, by such a process, in such a situation; to say nothing of the men; makes the practice of immersion, under such circumstances, highly improbable, if not impossible. The difficulty would have been even far greater, from the scarcity of water in many places in the holy land; where the universal practice of the apostles, of making disciples to Christ by baptism, would have required the use of it.

In Acts second, there is nothing in the history of the pentecostal baptism, to convince us, that Peter sent one individual home dripping wet. Some mocked, others said the apostles were filled with new wine. What would they have said, had they witnessed the scene closed with the immersion, or plunging under water, of three thousand people? Here also, not to mention the ludicrous nature of the scene, the scarcity of water makes immersion incredible. All the pools in Jerusalem, would scarcely have been sufficient for the purpose. The brook Kedron, (which was the common drain to take off the filth of the city,) would have procured anything, rather than "pure water." Heb. x. 22. To have emptied the cisterns on the tops of the houses, would have probably created an insurrection of the whole

city. The destruction of so many magazines of corn, would probably have been a less calamity.

The same inference may be drawn from Acts viii. 12: "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized." Here it must appear on the face of the history, that there was no immersion. Can it be supposed, even for a moment, to be credible, that the comely and holy propagation of christianity, was accompanied on such an occasion with a public, promiscuous, and simultaneous plunging of both sexes, by a total immersion under water, even if done in the most decent manner. That men, who were strangers, should take hold of women, without distinction of age, or condition, and plunge them into water, and then raise them up again out of it, and hold them up, and they expose them in this dismal state, to the eyes of the other sex, and to the gaze of the multitude; this seems utterly inconceivable, if not altogether irreconcilable with the purity of the gospel. Not only would the jews have objected to it, who were watching for every occasion of objection, but more especially would not the greeks, whose habitual jealousy was such, that it was found necessary

to appoint deaconesses, for the private instruction of their females—Rom. xvi. 1-4. In our own happy land, at the present day, the occasional public, total immersion of individuals, especially of females, requires for its toleration, all the advantage of custom, the respect christianity has acquired, and the liberal sentiments acquired by our religious liberty.

The more we investigate the circumstances of the two foregoing cases, the stronger will the presumptive evidence be against immersion; and this will increase, as we proceed to examine other passages, relating to the subject; especially in house-baptisms, or when baptism was performed within doors.

In every house-baptism, it is supposed, that there was always sufficient water at hand for its administration; and that the baptism of the householders and their children, was the first religious act that took place, after they assented to the truth of the apostle's doctrine respecting Christ, as the Son of God, and Saviour of sinners, in the same night, or on the same day; and in some instances, within the same hour. In all house-baptisms, the water is always supposed to have been brought into the room, or place, where the company was assembled, and baptism administered by an effusion of it on the

head or face; and not that the subject was carried out of the room to a bath, pool, or river, to be totally immersed. We never read in these house-baptisms, a single word about going down into, or coming up out of the water; nor of going to, and coming from the water.

In Acts x. 47-48, it is recorded that Peter said, "can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." Here it seems, that Peter proposed that water should be brought in, and that baptism should be administered to the whole company in the room where they were assembled; and that it was so administered by an effusion, by pouring or letting water fall upon them, as an emblem of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which had been poured out upon them; and this was performed before the assembly broke up, or separated. Here again, the idea of immersion seems incredible!

In reading the baptism of St. Paul, Acts xxii. 16, the same impression is made on the mind. "And Ananias said to Saul, and now, why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on

the name of the Lord." Also, Acts ix. 18. "And immediately there fell from his eyes, as it had been scales, and he arose, and was baptized; and when he had received meat, he was strengthened." Here Ananias represents baptism as a sign, symbol, or figure of washing; but dipping is not washing, things may be dipped that are never washed; washing is a distinct process subsequent upon dipping; and usually performed when the thing dipped, has again been raised up out of the water. This shews the error of making dipping and washing synonymous. Washing is very often performed by pouring water on the things to be washed. This is the mode usually referred to in the scriptures; especially when applied to persons, by pouring water on the hands and the feet of the persons to be washed—2 Kings iii. 11. John xiii. 5. It also accords with our burial with Christ in his death. There is nothing said about the apostles going down into the water, or coming up out of it; he is demanded to arise, and put himself into a position to receive the ordinance, at the hands of Ananias. The shock the apostle had received at his conversion, and his fasting three days, had reduced him to great weakness; yet he was immediately baptized, before he had

received any meat, or renewed his strength. Under these circumstances, could he have been immersed? Incredible!

In looking into the cases of Lydia and the gaoler, their baptisms seem to admit of the same conclusion—Acts xvi. 14-15. “And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul; and when she was baptized, and her household, (*oikas* or house) she intreated us,” &c. It is more than probable, that Lydia and her family, were baptized with water taken out of the river; can we suppose that this first act of religion, which followed her incipient faith in the apostle’s doctrine, was performed by plunging her, and her family, into the river; and that to by strangers, whom, probably, they never had heard of before; and even before she had had an opportunity of entering into her own house, to prepare for such a ceremony. The difficulty and monstrosity of total immersion is proved by these facts, as really as by the former. From the history of her case, there is no more proof that she and her family (who appear to have accompanied her in her baptism) were dipped in the river, and sent home dripping wet, than

there was that the gaoler and his family, who were baptized in the prison house, ver. 33, were. "And he," the gaoler, "took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized; he and all his straightway." Here we have not a single word about a bath, or a tank, any more than about a bason; water was brought, in some vessel, to wash their stripes; and water was brought in also to baptize the family; and the apostle baptized the gaoler and his family immediately, even before they suffered themselves, or the gaoler and his family, to take any refreshment; as though they could not discharge this first act of their commission in full, without stamping it with this broad seal of heaven, to confirm the declaration that they proclaimed to him, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

It may be replied, that the above interpretations of those cases are conjectural inferences, and, therefore, afford only a presumptive proof in favour of the mode of baptism they are brought forward to support, against immersion. This is freely granted, and nothing more is intended by them, than to afford collateral evidence, in support of the more direct and positive evidence brought forward in the former part of the work,

both with respect to the baptism of the spirit and of water ; and when both direct and collateral evidence are taken together, they present a body of evidence in favour of sprinkling or pouring, as being more scriptural, and more conformable to the practices of the apostles than immersion ; and which can never, by mere hypothesis and supposition, be overthrown.



PART THIRD.

THE MORAL DESIGNS OF BAPTISM.

CHAPTER I.

INCLUDES THE RELATION IT BEARS TO THE ANALOGY SUBSISTING BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT DISPENSATIONS OF TRUE RELIGION FROM THE BEGINNING.

IN tracing the foregoing particulars, the main object of the writer has been, distinctly to mark out the analogy subsisting between the corresponding rites of the jewish and christian dispensation; especially the initiatory rites, and the relation which both bear to parents, and to their children. That there is a unity of design, of a moral nature, in all the dispensations of heavenly grace to man, is certain and evident; and that they all bear a relation to each other, in the comprehensive plan of chartered covenanted mercies, as several parts of a whole. Each succeeding dispensation was, in substance, a republication of the first promise; “the

seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head ;" accompanied with such additional revelations, promises, precepts, and confirming seals as God was pleased to give, from time to time, for the edification of the church, and the furtherance of his own gracious designs. These revelations, and confirming seals, were appointed for the mutual instruction, both of parents and children, in their succeeding generations ; as well as to afford a standing testimony of the certainty of the fulfillment, on the part of the blessed God, of all his gracious promises.

In this appointment of the various dispensations, children were not mentioned in an accidental way merely, but they were made a distinct part, or a constituent branch of each ; and they stood exactly on the same footing in their external relation to the dispensation, as their parents did, and were initiated into it by the same ceremonial rite, and for the attainment of the same moral ends. This principle of introducing the children, as constituent branches, run through the whole series ; and it became more distinct and clear, as they succeeded each other. From the short history of the first dispensation, with our first parents, it is certain, that sacrifices were appointed, as much for

the benefit and instruction of the children, as they were for that of their parents. Whatever doubt, or uncertainty, might appear in the first instance, it was more fully recognized in the second; by the introduction of Noah and his family into the ark. The same principle was definitely settled in the case of Abraham, that the parent's rite, &c. should extend to children in their earliest infancy. The same principle was fully established by the introduction of the people of Israel into the Mosaic dispensation. Parents and children went together through the red sea, and were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea. The same principle became the frequent subject of prophecy, and especially in those prophecies which refer to gospel times. The Old Testament closes with this principle. Mal. iv. 5-6. The New Testament opens with it. Luke i. 16-17. Christ not only recognized, but established it, beyond any reasonable occasion of doubt, or disputation. This he did, by defending the children in the temple against the pharisees, declaring them to be the subjects of prophecy, Matt. xxi. 15-16, Ps. viii. 2, by rebuking his disciples for attempting to obstruct their admission to him, as their divine Saviour, by taking them up in his arms and blessing them; and as-

signing as a reason for his conduct, “for of such is the kingdom of God.” Mark x. 15-16. And, to establish their claim beyond all dispute, he took a little child, and set him in the midst of his disciples, in their collective capacity, as an assembled church; and demanded of them, that they should receive that little child, or infant, and such little children, in his own name, and in his father’s name. As their divine legislator, he enjoins it on them to receive this child, and such little children, with the same religious respect, as they would receive both him and his Father; (sacred, solemn, and awful injunction!) and the reason he assigns for it, is this, that such little children, should become great in his kingdom—Luke ix. 47-48. On the day of pentecost, the apostles opened their commission on the same principle, by declaring, that the promise was to them and to their children, as well as to those afar off; and that they and their children, stood exactly on the same footing under the gospel dispensation, as they had done under the former. The apostles also confirmed the same principles in their subsequent ministry, by baptizing families, as such; as in the cases of Cornelius, Lydia, the Gaoler, Crispus, &c.

We have thus presented to us, an unbroken

chain of evidence, running through every dispensation of true religion; that children, were made a constituent branch of each dispensation, in connection with their parents; and we cannot break into this arrangement, without destroying that analogy, and beautiful harmony, which God has established between them. This principle is common to them, whatever other changes they may have undergone, in succeeding each other. It must, therefore, be a vain attempt, to say the least of it, to seek to destroy this harmony, by endeavouring to prove, that baptism bears no analogy to the former initiatory rites, especially to circumcision, and by declaring that there is no relation between them. As long as the scriptures are open to our free inspection, it may be proved, and that demonstratively too, that the New Testament, by its frequent references to the old, maintains this analogy, with respect to the principles and practices we have been establishing; the right of children to stand in an external relation to the church, and to have that relation unto them confirmed, by the initiatory seal, of the dispensation under which they live.

It has been frequently asked, by those who are opposed to the above principles: what has the Old Testament to do with the New Testament ordinance? They state,

that they cannot understand the propriety of looking into Genesis, for direction on the subject. That they cannot feel the force of arguments, drawn from the Abrahamic covenant, or the rite of circumcision: nor can they see what connection it has with the New Testament ordinance of baptism. It may be remarked, that the question, with the reasons by which it is supported, is founded on mere sophistry, and the perversion of the order of things. The question, when fairly put, is not what the old Testament has to do with the new on the subject, but what the new has to do with the old; and whether it does, or does not, send us to the old on the subject of baptism, for direction and confirmation. Surely, as the two inspired apostles, Paul and Peter, invite us to accompany them to these ancient records, to learn the analogy between Noah's ark, circumcision, and baptism, the objectors must feel perfectly satisfied with the propriety of joining these inspired men in this inquiry, and to learn from them its reasons, without opposition, or gainsaying; but if they refuse, we must leave them to reconcile their dissatisfaction with these holy inspired men, or abide the consequence. Let it never be forgotten, that whether we refer to those rights that have ceased in their practice, or to those

which are to continue to the end of time, the apostles wished us not to be ignorant of their design, which was to be the means of instruction in spiritual things. 1 Cor. x. 1-4.

II.

THE MORAL DESIGNS OF BAPTISM, IN ITS RELATION TO THE APOSTLES' PRACTICE OF ADMINISTERING IT, IN CONNEXION WITH THE FIRST LESSONS OF CHRISTIANITY.

IN Heb. vi. 1-2, baptism is declared to be one of the first principles of the doctrines of Christ. It is the leading rite of the christian dispensation, by which it distinguished it from all other systems of religion, whether jewish or heathen; and therefore, it is united with preaching the gospel. Matt. xxviii. 19-20: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things." Here baptism is appointed a means of grace, as well as teaching. They were to teach and baptize, or baptize and teach, as the case might be; uniting the ritual sign of their ministry, with their verbal message, to make both the means of instruction to the nations.

Upon this principle, the first inspired teachers of christianity acted. Wherever they went, they preached the gospel; and when an individual, or a company of persons, shewed a disposition to be taught, and to be directed by them, one of the first things they enjoined on them, was to be baptized. This they urged them immediately to submit to; and whether their convictions, or conversion, was of a saving nature, or not, they exhorted them not to delay, but to submit to the ordinance at once. In some instances, as soon as water could be procured, they administered it to them, even before they separated, though they had never seen each other before, and it was uncertain whether they should ever see each other again; and baptism, seems to have been the concluding part of the service.

This unhesitating promptitude of the apostles in administering the ordinance, in connection with the very first delivery of their message, and of uniting it with the very first lessons of christianity, seems adapted to impress on the mind, the following ideas:

I. To give their hearers a deep impression of the character of the gospel, as a new dispensation of religion; and as distinguished from every other system, by the sacred names in which they administered baptism, as well

as by the application of the ordinance itself; and that they considered it as consistent with the design, spirit, and ultimate sign of their commission, to administer it with the very first lessons of christianity.

II. By thus acting, they conveyed the idea, that they could not proceed a second stage in their work, nor expect a blessing to attend it, without stamping their message with this broad seal of heaven, in confirmation of its sacred truth.

III. That it was necessary, for the purpose of illustrating their verbal message, as John had previously done, when he said, "I indeed, baptize you with water, but he that cometh after me, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."

IV. By this prompt administration of it, the apostles evidently must have understood its application, as a means of grace, instituted for the purpose of introducing its subjects into that course of spiritual instruction, which through the divine blessing, might produce those spiritual and moral ends, which baptism represented.

From the history of baptism, we do not learn, that it was ever administered as a token, that the remission of sins had been already attained; but in connexion with exhortations to repentance and faith, as means

to obtain a knowledge of the way of forgiveness, as well as to obtain the blessing itself. This is the uniform language of the scriptures, in all the exhortations to baptism.

Matt. iii. 2-5-6 : Then preached John, saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Then went out to him, Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."

Mark i. 4 : "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." Luke iii. 3. "And he came into all the country round about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

Acts ii. 37-38 : "Then said Peter unto them, repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins."

Acts viii. 12-13 : "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of the Lord Jesus, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon believed also : and when he was baptized." Ver. 37-38 : "And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he baptized him."

Acts x. 47-48: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."

Acts xvi. 14: "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household."

Acts xvi. 32-34: "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house."

Acts xviii. 8: "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized."

Acts xxii. 16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Acts ix. 18: "And he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened."

In taking a review of the above passages, as collated together, it is self-evident, that

baptism was administered, in connexion with the very first lessons of christianity. In seven cases out of the nine, this is plain on the face of the history ; and we have no reason to doubt, but that the same rule was observed, with respect to the Samaritans and Corinthians.

It seems to have been the united and uniform practice of the apostles, and of the first inspired preachers ; even that, when any person professed to believe in the truth of their doctrine, and upon that confession, was willing to submit to the ordinance, not to delay their baptism, no, not for an hour. They made no distinction between one subject and another, on the ground of their conversion being real, or not. There was no putting any one aside, or holding him in suspense, on account of doubts, as to his real conversion. Neither was there any difference made between persons, as to their natural, acquired, or even spiritual capacity, to comprehend the important truths they were declaring to them. All they required of them in this stage of their administrations, was a professed belief of their report respecting Christ, as the Son of God, and the only Saviour ; and a willingness to place themselves under the instructions and discipline of the church, for the furtherance of their knowledge, and for

the confirmation of their faith in these truths; as the means, by which, to obtain the remission of their sins, and the transformation of their characters into the image, and their lives into the spirit of the gospel. The apostles refused none, who made such a declaration of their faith, and manifested a disposition to unite themselves to them; and listen to their counsel and doctrine, whatever might be their present conceptions, convictions, or belief. On the contrary, all that were willing to submit to the ordinance, of whatever age, or condition in life, they immediately baptized. Then Peter urged them, and said unto them, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

It is clear, that Peter exhorted those to repent, who were already convicted and pricked in their hearts, for the sin of murdering the Lord Jesus; but his exhortations to repentance and baptism, are simultaneous. He did not wait even for a day, to prove those to be true penitents, whom he baptized on the day of pentecost. Peter and the other apostles, do not appear to have administered it, upon the ground, that they were true penitents, or that they were not. They proceeded on the principle, and after

the manner of John's baptism ; using the rite as a means of repentance, as a motive and encouragement to it, but not as an evidence that the subject had already repented, though convicted or convinced ; nor as a certificate of the remission of sins. These blessings were set before them in promises, which regarded the future, and which should be fulfilled, if their repentance should prove sincere. It is true, that the clearer the evidence of the genuine conversion of the subject to be baptized, appeared, such evidence would afford an additional reason for their baptism. This, however, does not appear to be the leading, original, or universal principle, on which the apostles administered the ordinance.

The universal principle, on which the apostles, and first inspired ministers of the gospel appear to have acted, was, that baptism was a means of grace, designed to promote a spirit of repentance and saving faith, where they did not appear to exist ; and to strengthen and confirm them, where there were appearances that did exist, as the case might be, otherwise where was the propriety of Peter's uniting repentance and baptism, as simultaneous acts in connexion with the promise in the future, and not in the present tense. Besides, if it were intended to have

been administered to the subject, as a token of his real conversion, genuine repentance, and saving faith ; would not the apostles have placed its subjects under a previous state of probation for a season, before they administered the ordinance to them ? Surely they would ; but this they never did : no, they administered it, in connexion with the very first lessons of christianity, and accompanied it with exhortations to repentance and faith ; and enforced it by the promises of the remissions of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, as blessings yet to be obtained. Even in the case of the apostle Paul, of whose genuine conversion, Ananias could have had no doubt, yet he exhorted him to be baptized, and to call on the name of the Lord, as the means of washing away his sins, as a blessing yet to be obtained ; of which, baptism was to be administered, as the ritual sign. It is also certain, that those instructions which Ananias gave him, respecting the Messiahship of Christ, as the Son of God, and the only Saviour, must have been subsequent to his baptism ; and this, as in the case of the eunuch, was the first article of his faith, and the first subject of his ministry. Acts ix. 18—xxii. 22. 16.

It seems then, to have been the united sentiment of the apostles, and the first in-

spired preachers of christianity, that baptism should not be delayed, no, not for an hour; whenever a person professed to believe their doctrine, and was willing to submit to the ordinance. The nature of the confession they demanded of such, previous to their baptism, was not in any one of the cases, whether they were truly converted to God, or not; but whether they believed in Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, and the risen Saviour, and the truth of their message concerning him. In all their exhortations, they urged on them the necessity of sincerity, both in their professions of repentance, and faith: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest."—Acts viii. 37. That they must be brought to genuine repentance and conversion, before their sins would be blotted out. Acts iii. 19: "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;" "and that they must be born of the spirit, as well as of water, before they could enter into the spiritual properties, and privileges of the kingdom of God.—John iii. 3-5. But these exhortations and representations, are very different to demanding of the subject a declaration, that he believes himself to be really converted, and born again; that he has actually repented, and already obtained the forgiveness of his sins, and that

his faith, is the genuine faith of God's operation. Such professions as these were not demanded in any of the cases recorded in the scriptures, as a pre-requisite to baptism; nor even made by the persons that were baptized. All that was required, or all that was professed, was faith in the truth of those things, that were declared unto them concerning Christ, and the way of salvation through him; and as the means of obtaining the remission of sins, through his name. Having obtained this, they required no more, but immediately administered the ordinance to them.

The utmost that can be said of the confessions of these first converts to christianity, previous to their baptism, is, that they confessed their sins to John at the time of their baptism. That they gladly received the declaration of Peter, who made known to them, that there was remission, even for the heinous crime of murdering Christ, of which they now stood convicted.

The Samaritans believed the preaching of Philip, and so did Simon Magus, who was among them. Cornelius said to Peter, that he and his friends were assembled together, to hear all things that God had commanded Peter to communicate unto them. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, to

attend to the things that were spoken of Paul. The Gaoler rejoiced in God with all his heart, believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom he might be saved, and his house ; and the eunuch said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

If we take all these confessions together, they amount to this : they believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and that he was the only Saviour by whom they could obtain the remission of sins, and through whom they could be saved. Their baptism followed immediately on those declarations, without the least delay ; and this prepared the way for their future instruction, in a more perfect knowledge of those important truths.

It appears then, that the design of Christ, in instituting baptism, as the first and leading rite of the christian dispensation, was to appoint it, as one of the first means of grace ; thereby, to bring the subject of it into that relation of the church. Thus, they would be placed more immediately under those other means of grace, which should follow ; which, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, might lead them into a saving knowledge of those sacred truths they had been baptized into the profession of, if they did not possess it ; and to increase, strengthen, and confirm it, where it was already enjoyed. These

seem the moral ends for which baptism was administered, and that it was never administered as a certificate to the subject of his real conversion, even admitting he was converted; much less as a token of the remission of sins already obtained; nor as a passport into the full and unlimited participation of the privileges of the church. This, in all cases, must rest on other grounds, by whatever mode, or under whatever circumstances baptism might be administered.

THE MORAL PURPOSES AND DESIGNS
OF BAPTISM POINTED OUT BY
THE SCRIPTURES.

IT has been said, that baptism, (as well as the Lord's supper,) being an institution of a positive nature, will not admit of analogical reasoning, like moral precepts; as it affords no internal light, no data to reason from; and therefore, must be taken as it is, and our only appeal must be to the law of the institution. But, surely it will not be denied, that how positive soever any institution may be in its own nature, and even in its appointment, that it was intended for moral pur-

poses; as it would be unworthy of God, (be it spoken with reverence,) as the moral governor of man, to appoint any institution that was not designed for moral purposes, and directed in its application for moral ends. Therefore, as to its end and design, baptism is as capable of moral and analogical reasoning, as any other class of precepts. Now it must strike every one, who thinks seriously on the subject, that all our inquiries about the circumstances of an institution, can answer no valuable purpose, while we neglect to inquire into the moral ends to be answered by its appointment. It must be confessed, that this has been too much overlooked, on the subject of baptism, though it is of the first importance in its nature, and most serious in its consequence. If, it be asked, what moral ends are to be inculcated by baptism? The answer is plain and self-evident. It inculcates all the doctrines, precepts, and duties, by which a reference is made to it in the scriptures, either as a doctrine to be believed, or a precept to be obeyed. A reference to some of those passages where it is expressly mentioned, or evidently referred to, will establish this point.

I. Baptism teaches us the doctrine of the Trinity, and the relation that each person in the Trinity, bears to the plan of redemption.

It teaches the love of the Father, the mediation of the Son, and the influence of the Holy Spirit. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost—Matt. xxiii. 19-20—2 Cor. xiii. 14.

II. It teaches the necessity of regeneration. “Except a man be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”—John iii. 5. “He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”—iii. 5.

III. It teaches the necessity of repentance and confession of sins. “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”—Matt. iii. 2. “And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.”—Mark i. 5.

IV. It teaches the necessity of faith in Christ, (as well as baptism,) for the remission of sins. “Preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.—Luke iii. 3. “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—John i. 29. “He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned: although he has been baptized.”

V. It teaches the necessity of an application of the blood of Christ, to the conscience by faith, in its cleansing influence, to remove the guilt and pollution of sin. “Arise, and

be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”—Acts xxii. 16.
 “Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”—Heb. x. 22.

VI. It teaches the necessity of the influences of the Holy Spirit, to give a saying efficacy to the verbal message of the word, in preaching the gospel, accompanied with the ritual sign of water baptism. John preached, saying, “I, indeed, baptize you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.”—Mark i. 8.
 “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word.”—Eph. v. 26.

VII. It teaches the necessity of putting on a public profession of Christ. “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.”—Gal. iii. 27.

VIII. It teaches the necessity of a conformity to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, by a daily mortification of sin, and the progressive sanctification of the soul. “In putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism.”—Col. ii. 11-12.
 “Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was

raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”—Rom. vi. 4.

IX. It teaches us to cultivate a spirit of christian unity, whatever may be our station or condition in life, or our lesser differences on the subject of religion. “For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be jew or gentile, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”—1 Cor. xii. 13—Gal. iii. 27-28.

X. It teaches the necessity of a willingness to suffer with Christ, and for him, and his cause. But Jesus said, “Ye know not what you ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they say unto him, we are able.”—Mat. xx. 22.

XI. It teaches us the necessity of seeking to bring in fresh converts into the church, to fill up the places of departed saints. “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, [or in the place of the dead] if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?”—1 Cor. xv. 29. This also teaches the necessity of exercising a hope in the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and that eternal life promised in the gospel.

XII. It teaches the necessity of parents answering a good conscience towards God, by obtaining baptism for their children, as well as themselves. Noah built the ark, and introduced his children into it, both natural and adopted, for their preservation from the destruction of the wicked; and for their instruction under its protection, for their future spiritual benefit. "The like figure [to Noah's ark,] whereunto, even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."—1 Peter iii. 21, compared with Gen. vi. 13-19, and Heb. xi. 7.

In taking a review of the above passages thus classed together, as well as of others of the same import, in which baptism is connected with the doctrines and precepts of the gospel; it is sufficiently evident, that instead of its being restricted, more especially to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; that it bears a relation to the doctrines and precepts of the gospel, generally. Therefore, such a restriction of its import is mistaken, partial, and unjust; and is calculated to excite such prejudice in the mind, as will prevent those comprehensive views of the subject, which the scriptures have given of it, for the production of those moral ends, which they

have pointed out, by uniting it with the doctrines and precepts of the gospel in general. It is also evident, by this union of it with the doctrines and precepts of the gospel, that it was intended and instituted as a means of grace, for the progressive instruction and improvement of the baptized ; in the knowledge of the doctrines, precepts, duties, and blessings of the gospel. In fact, this arises out of the nature of the case itself ; for what conception, could these converts of an hour, have, even of the first principles of the doctrines of Christ ? much less could they understand the doctrines and precepts connected with the sacred names, into which they had been baptized.

But, by uniting these sacred doctrines and precepts with their baptism, the scriptures enjoin on its subjects, the imperative necessity and obligation, to use every means of grace in the exercise of faith, for the purpose of increasing their knowledge and experience in an acquaintance with these spiritual truths : and to seek to enter into their spirit and design. They also teach us to seek a progressive, increasing, and suitable conformity to them, in our lives and conversation, all the days of our probationary pilgrimage on the earth. To bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, “ that ye may have our fruit unto

holiness, and the end everlasting life.” “Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”

The above passages, likewise shew, that Christ and his apostles did not treat baptism, with that indifference, and even contempt, which some modern professors of religion have done ; neither did they stigmatize it with an unappropriate epithet, by calling it a non-essential of religion, nor did they in any one respect treat it as such. It is very evident, that they made it very essential, in uniting it so very closely with the doctrines and precepts of the gospel ; and the constant reference they made to it, to enforce them in their practical application. Thus uniting the ritual sign and verbal message, as means of grace, for the progressive instruction and promotion, both of the faith and practice of the baptized, these are the moral ends for which it was designed.

THE MORAL DESIGNS OF BAPTISM, IN ITS RELATION TO FAMILIES.

UPON the same principle of making baptism, not only a confirming seal of the truth

of their ministry, but also an introductory means of grace; the apostles not only baptized individuals as such, but also families, as families, in their family capacity. Whenever the parents professed sincerely, to believe in the truth of their doctrine, whether male or female, their children were admitted to the ordinance, in connexion with, and on the faith of the parents, of whatever age, if still under their government; and for the same moral purposes. Then salvation came to that house—Luke xix. 9, and parents and children were brought under the immediate care of the church; that both might be conjointly placed under that course of instruction, which through the divine blessing, might prove the power of God to their salvation; except, indeed, the children were grown so old, and so hardened in sin, as to rebel both against their Father in heaven, as well as their parent on earth; and in that case, they must be left to their own responsibility.

Upon the same principle, we are not only warranted, but we are bound to baptize, not only the parents, but their offspring with them. In refusing to do so, we dare to set in judgment upon a whole lineage, as though there never had before been one of the whole line of descent, and never would be one

after, that would be a partaker of the blessing of the promise, that is made to us and to our children ; as well as to the unabolished promise made to Abraham, “to be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee,” and that “in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” We also disown an ordinance, which God has appointed for the confirmation of the promises, he has made to us, and our children ; and refuse to follow the practice of apostles and evangelists, of primitive christianity. We may farther add, that if the apostles did not practice family baptism on the day of pentecost, they did not act as under the eye of their master, who pronounced children to be members of his visible kingdom, received them into his arms and blessed them, and commanded his apostles to receive them, in his own and in his father’s name ; nor did they act according to their final commission ; nor did they act in conformity to their own declaration. “The promise is to you and your children ;” nor did they act, as they afterwards did, when repentance was granted to the gentiles.

It is a plain and undeniable fact, recorded in the Acts of the apostles, that baptism was administered to those who professed their belief in the truth of their doctrine, and to their families upon the faith of their parents,

and upon the very first declaration of their faith. Nor were these family baptisms new cases, nor singular cases, nor rare cases, nor cases to be accounted for, or justified by any peculiar circumstances ; such as had not happened before, and might not soon happen again. They were mentioned as matters of course, without any particular expression of surprise, or admiration: and to baptize them was as much then a common practice, as it was to preach the gospel to them. “And when she (Lydia*) was baptized, and her house, or family ;” the same is related of the Gaoler, of Stephanus, and others. Although it is in the Acts of the apostles, that family baptism is first particularly and expressly mentioned, there can be no just cause to doubt, but that it had been so administered, from the beginning of the gospel dispensation ; and even if this should be disputed, the practice of the apostles afterwards, is a sufficient ground, warrant, and rule, for our conduct in baptizing families.

* It has been lately asserted, by some of the opponents to family baptism, that they could make it appear, that Lydia was not a married woman, and consequently had no children of her own. Wonders will never cease ! What new discovery will not the century produce ! More than a quarter of which, is already run out ! To what extremities will not the hypothetical supporters of a favorite system proceed in propping it up, when it is discovering symptoms of decay.

Should it be asked, can it be proved, that there were any infants in all, or even in any one of those families that were baptized? The direct and plain answer is this; the term house, or family, includes infants in its very meaning, as really as it includes adult children. It includes children of all ages. The question is not so much whether there were infants in the family, as whether there were children of any age, who were under the control and government of their parents. The question does not refer so much to the age of the children, as to whose right they had the ordinance administered to them in; was it their own, or that of their parents? It is evident, that the families both of Lydia and the gaoler, were baptized in the right, and on the faith of their parents; and their cases bear an affinity both to Noah and to Abraham. Noah's children were not only come to years of discretion, but were married; yet they were under the control and government of Noah, in respect to their introduction into the ark. Both they and their wives were admitted in the right of their sire's faith—Heb. xi. 7. Abraham, also, circumcised Ishmael at the age of thirteen years, and Isaac at the age of eight days. Nor is their in the gospel, any more than in these cases, any exception made to

exclude children. Their continuance in the family is a fair presumption, that they were either under age, or were willing to remain under the government, influence, instruction, and example of their parents : and, if after marriage they continued in the family, the increase of infants is only the greater ; nor is there in the nature, or circumstances of baptism itself, any thing to exclude them, any more than there was in circumcision.

Baptism is the only ordinance that is given to families, as families, under the gospel. Mention is made of churches in the houses of some, but we no where read, that a believer and his family, or house, formed a distinct church, or ever received the Lord's supper. It is also a striking fact, that there is not a single instance on record, from the beginning to the end of the New Testament history, of the children of believers being baptized when they had come to years of maturity, on their embracing their parents' faith, and publicly announcing it. If their baptism had been left to adult age, would there not have been some cases, nay, many, of their embracing the faith of their parents, and of their baptism on professing it ? How is this total silence to be accounted for, but upon the principle that they were previously baptized with their parents, or under their

direction? Nor are we to conceive, that the four families mentioned as baptized, were the only families which enjoyed this privilege. These were only a specimen of hundreds and thousands of families, which, in the first propagation of the gospel, enjoyed, as families, the same blessed privilege. In tracing the scriptures, in reference to the claims of children, it is a subject that must strike those with surprise and pleasure, who impartially attend to the particular notice they take of the religious interest of children, in connexion with their parents. Through each dispensation, children are constituent branches of it, in connexion with their parents, by an introductory ordinance. Special injunctions are given to instruct them in the knowledge and practice of true religion; and special guards are set up against the innovations of those privileges which had been granted to them, in common with their parents, from time to time; as though the scripture foresaw, that a generation would arise, that would seek to disinherit them; from mistaken notions, or some other causes. It would afford a very interesting treatise, judicially, to trace the different aspects the scriptures take in reference to their religious interest.

When a man with his family, are either degraded or ennobled, the children, of what-

ever age, from their relation, are involved ; not only in political changes, but also in religious matters, both in reference to external privileges and judgments. Does not the baptism of the parent convey the same idea ; we have no proof that any of Lydia's family believed, yet they were constituted relatively holy, by their dedication to God in baptism, in connexion with, and on the faith of, their mother ; according to 1 Cor. vii. 14 : " For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband : else were your children unclean : but now are they holy." By this relative holiness, they are entitled to the introductory right of christianity ; and if a man, at the time of his baptism, has not any children, yet, on the same principle, if he should afterwards become a family man, his children would be entitled to the ordinance.

By this principle, that both parents and children should be baptized, the apostles laid parents under special obligations, to attend to the instruction of their children, and children to conform to their discipline. For this reason, the apostles sent their salutations and exhortations to christian families, and exhorted them, from christian principles, with christian motives, and to christian ends,

to a discharge of their relative duties ; as husbands and wives, parents and children ; as well as in the other relations of life, in which, as christians, they stood to each other, as masters and servants. But with what consistency could they exhort persons to the discharge of these duties, enforced by such principles, motives, and moral ends, on a system, by which they stood in no relation. They would then be under no special obligation to yield obedience, from considerations drawn from that relation. All the apostle's exhortations to relative duties, founded on christian principles, must have been absurd ; if the persons to whom he directed them, stood in no kind of relation to the church, or to that system of things, from whence he drew his reasons for their compliance.

In what way could that relation be recognised, but by their baptism. This laid them under christian obligations, to attend to their instructions, of whatever age, relation, or station ; and to discharge their duties from christian principles, both as respected the present life, and that which is to come. Upon the same principle, it is clear, that parents, by their own baptism, and that of their children, are laid under christian obligations, or obligations both to Christ and his church ; to train up their children in the nurture and

fear of the Lord, and diligently to instruct them in the principles and duties of christianity, both by precept and example, and they are highly responsible for their neglect. For the same reasons, the apostle enjoined that none should be chosen to offices in the church, either as pastors or deacons, who did not conform to this rule. Ruling their houses well, having their children in subjection, with all gravity; and thus, by setting a proper example, give weight to their administrations and exhortations, both to parents and children. But, how they could train up their own children in the nurture and fear of the Lord, and exhort others to do the same, and instruct them in principles and practices, founded on a system of things, their children stood in no relation to, is not, as far as consistency goes, to me, easy to be conceived.

It is true, that exhortations to relative duties may be given to parents and children, and to persons in every other relation of life, independently of baptism, as well as to those who never have been baptized. These exhortations must then be urged on other grounds, than any relation in which they stand to, or are bound to act from, christian principles. It is equally certain, that many good people, who do not hold with family

baptism, pay every attention to the religious instruction of their children, and of their servants also, &c. both by precept and example. Many of their children have turned out pious characters ; but then, they attended to those things from other considerations, such as parental authority, affection, and example ; which, through the divine blessing, have been overruled for their good. These benefits have arisen rather from accidental circumstances, or more properly speaking, from a gracious interposition of a merciful providence towards them, than from any particular relation in which they stood, either to their parents, or the church, founded on christian principles. Though God, by his gracious influences, overrules those instructions to those who have not been baptized ; yet this is no just reason, why we should neglect this introductory ordinance, since God has appointed it as a means of grace, for the benefit both of parents and children.

In the first propagation of the gospel, in any place now, as well as in the days of the apostles, cases of adult baptism will occur, as adults are the subjects to whom the ordinance must be first administered. In such cases, we meet with persons who profess to renounce their false religion, and who declare their belief in the truth of the doctrine of the

gospel with apparent sincerity, like the eunuch, we are bound in duty to baptize them ; and if they are family men, or women, to baptize their children with them, with all convenient speed. From this extraordinary case, we descend to the ordinary practice of baptizing the children of those, who have been thus baptized, from one generation to another, on the same principle that circumcision was practised ; with the additional enlargement and liberty of the gospel, in the admission of females upon the same grant. Gal. iii. 27-28, and also, the choice of our own convenient time, for the performance of the ordinance. In those places where the gospel has long been established, when cases of adult baptism occur, it should be administered upon the same principle.

The subject of baptism is of the highest importance to parents, both as it respects themselves, and their children ; especially when a season occurs for its administration, by an addition made to the family. It is a season calculated, if properly improved, to afford many important instructions to such families, and their connexions. It affords a new occasion of dedicating an immortal soul to the service of God, as well as of renewing the dedication of ourselves and families to him. It affords opportunities for renewed

ratification of God's mercies to us, and our seed. It is a season to awaken our attention to the important trust committed to our charge, and to quicken our zeal in the discharge of family duties—to excite our gratitude for mercies and blessings received—to strengthen our faith in the promises of future good, both to us, and our seed after us. It is a season, of a figurative representation of washing away of sins, in the name of the Lord; of which, pouring of the baptismal element of water upon the subject, is the outward and ritual sign;—it is a special season to implore the quickening, and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, to rest on the baptized, and all the family; and to intreat for the supplies of that grace, which is all-sufficient to save the soul, and to prepare it either for life or death; and that “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”—2 Cor. 13-14.

The author respectfully suggests to parents, as well as to others, the propriety of being careful, always to treat the subject with religious respect; and to teach their children, as well as others, to do the same. They would do well to instruct them in the moral ends for which it was appointed; that

it is an introductory means of grace, for their spiritual improvement; as well as a confirming seal, which God affixes to those promises, that are given, in common, both to parents and children. Parents, also, should instruct them in the nature of the promises, and endeavour to impress their minds with the necessity, and importance, of seeking a personal interest in the promises, by an application of their blessings, through the influence of the Holy Spirit to their own hearts. In every such instance of baptism, it would be well if the head of the family would make it more a season of family religion, than is often done. It should lead parents to self-examination, and serious enquiry, as to how far they have discharged those family duties enjoined on them by the sacred scriptures; what duties have been neglected in the family—what circumstances there are in the family calculated to counteract the beneficial effects of family instruction, and family worship—what improvement could be adopted to bring the whole of the family, more immediately, under its happy influence, with special reference to the interests of their immortal souls. The whole should be accompanied with special, earnest, and repeated prayer in the closet, and in the

family, as well as in the sanctuary,* for the out-pouring of the influences of the Holy Spirit upon every branch of the family; of which the pouring of water on the subject baptized is an emblem. These supplications should be grounded on those promises given to the families of the Lord's Israel, and should be presented at the throne of grace, in the exercise of a lively faith in them. We should pray that God would be graciously pleased to fulfil these promises, both to us, and to our's; and especially that, where he says, "from this day will I bless you." The benefits that might be expected to result from such a procedure, on such an occasion, both to the heads and members of families, if conducted in a serious and devotional spirit, and accompanied with suitable instruc-

* The author's humble opinion is, that baptism should, if possible, be administered in public; and that if there are other children in the family, who have been previously baptized, they should attend to witness the ceremony, after having been previously informed, that they had been the subjects of the ordinance. They should be instructed, according to their capacity, in the moral ends of its institution. Those entertainments which are usually given on such occasions, should be conducted with a spirit of religious feeling as much as possible. Perhaps it would in general be preferable, to give the entertainment at another time, to prevent the family from being diverted from the solemnity of the occasion, and the opportunity to improve it.

tion, cannot be calculated. It would have a tendency to impress serious thoughts on the minds of children, domestics, and others, as to the religious nature of the ordinance; and to lead them to view it, not as a mere ceremony following on the birth of the child. It would afford a special opportunity to inculcate the moral ends of baptism, both in respect to the soul's salvation, and to the various relations of life, in which the family stand to each other; founded on the relation into which they are brought to the dispensation of the gospel, by their baptism. It might be the means of producing a revival of religion in the family, and of bringing upon it, abundantly, the promise made to Abraham: "that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed."

THE MORAL DESIGNS OF BAPTISM,
IN RELATION TO MINISTERS AND
CHURCHES.

The ministers of Christ derive their authority to preach the gospel, and to baptize, from Christ, and Christ alone. This authority they derive from him, Mat. v. 20, Acts

i. 24, Eph. iv. xi., 1 Cor. ix. 16, independently of any man, or any society of men, by what name soever they may be called. No man, or body of men, has a right to dictate to the minister, whom he shall, or whom he shall not baptize; any more than whether he shall, or shall not preach the gospel. When any man, or society of men, or any church, attempts such dictation, it not only invades the minister's right, but also assumes the authority of Christ. No minister ought to submit to such interference; for, in so doing, he virtually gives up that part of his commission, which authorizes him to baptize, as well as to preach the gospel. Christ has not invested his ministers with the delicate business of becoming the inquisitorial judges of men's consciences, or real characters; and to divine, whether they are truly converted characters or not, as a pre-requisite for the ordinance of baptism. Nor has he invested them with an authority to receive or refuse any, upon the supposition of their fitness, or unfitness, for the ordinance, resting on their own private judgment. The apostles were not invested with this authority, nor did they baptize any on this principle. All they demanded was, an acknowledgment of their belief in the truth of their testimony, and a relinquishment of

their former principles, whether jewish or heathen. On their making these declarations, if they were willing to submit to the ordinance, they had no choice, nor did they assume any, but they baptized them without delay. The authority to judge of men's real characters, belongs to Christ, and to Christ alone; the authority he never delegated to any creature.—John v. 22.

The minister's office is distinctly defined in his commission: "Go and preach the gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them (the baptized) to observe all things, whatever I have commanded them." Thus they were taught to lead them into that course of instruction, which, through the divine blessing, would discipline their minds, and conduct them into the experience and practice of those virtues, which would qualify them for an unrestricted union to the church, and full communion with it in all its privileges.

The ministers of the gospel possess a full and independent authority from Christ, both to preach and baptize, and to recommend such as they have baptized, to the particular cognizance of the church, as visible members. They may claim its special assistance, by the union of influence, example, and prayers, in

connexion with the ministry of the word ; with a view to the production of those moral qualifications, which shall entitle the subject, in the judgment of the church, to a full admittance into its fellowship ; yet, the minister has received no authority from Christ, and has no right to impose any one on the church, for full communion, without its consent, or contrary to its voice. Though the church possesses no authority to interdict the minister from uniting baptism with preaching the gospel ; yet, in its collective capacity, whether it consists of few or many, rich or poor, it does possess a right given by Christ himself, to judge of the sentiments and conduct of those, who may apply for admittance into its special fellowship and communion. 1 Cor. v. 4—Matt. xviii. 15-19. Therefore, no minister, nor deacon, nor committee, or any select few, by whatever name they may be called, have any authority or power from Christ, to impose any persons on the church for full communion, contrary to its voice and consent. This appears to be the line of demarcation, the scripture has drawn between the minister's authority, and that of the church. Where this rule of conduct is observed by the minister and the church, and where they mutually act upon these principles, without intruding

upon, or one officiously intermeddling with the promise of the other ; and where they cordially unite for the production of those moral ends, which are designed to be accomplished by the institutions of the gospel : we may pronounce a church happy, walking in the commandments and ordinance of the Lord blameless ; and there we may expect to see them, in an increasing and prosperous state.—1 Peter v. 1-5.

One occasion of mistake, on the subject of baptism, has arisen, from its having been made a title as by right, to a full admission into the fellowship of the church, and to a participation of the Lord's supper. This does not follow, as a necessary consequence. It has already been proved, that though circumcision was a necessary previous qualification, for a right participation of the passover, it was not the *only* one required. There were other subsequent ceremonies appointed, which were to be punctiliously attended to, before any person dared to partake of the sacred feast. These ceremonies were to be repeated, previously to every instance of its celebration : sanctioned by an awful denunciation, that those should be cut off from God's people, who treated them with contempt, or neglect. Although these ceremonies were not considered in themselves of

a moral nature, yet, they pointed out the necessity of possessing suitable moral qualifications, for a spiritual and profitable celebration of this holy feast; such as obedience to the divine will, and faith in the design of its appointment. Ex. xii. 2-6—Heb. xi. 28—Num. x. 3-14.

It is also a fact on the face of the history, that the first converts, both among the jews and gentiles, were baptized previously to a full admittance into the church, where one existed, or of being formed into one, where it never existed before. Other and subsequent qualifications, of a moral nature, were required, in addition to their observance of the ritual ordinance, before they could have been admitted to the full enjoyment of such a privilege. Those who were baptized on the day of pentecost, could have had no distinct knowledge of the nature, moral obligations, or duties of a christian church. The apostles could have had no opportunity to prove, that they possessed such qualifications. They must have received subsequent instructions in the nature of those things, before they could have obtained a full admission. Their subsequent conduct, and not their baptism, nor even the confession they made on the occasion, entitled them to, and confirmed them in this privilege. If

there were any who did not attend to such subsequent instructions, there can be no doubt, but that they were refused this privilege, though baptized. The three thousand are not said to have been admitted into such a fellowship with the church, as entitled them to a participation of the Lord's supper, on account of their baptism, or the confession they made on the occasion; but, that their continuance with the apostles, and of their stedfastness in their doctrine, entitled them to the privilege of breaking bread with them.

The question has been asked, how this agrees with Acts ii. 41? "Added to the church the same day." We may notice in the first place, this citation of the passage is incorrect, for it is not said, "added to the church," but added to them, or to their number. This, indeed, may prove to have a very different meaning, from being added to the church, as expressed in the 47 ver. "And the Lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved." It is also necessary to make a distinction between what took place at the day of pentecost, and what took place afterwards, in order to obtain a correct view of the case. "Then they that gladly received the word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them, about three thousand souls." Here it is evident,

that this verse closes the first day's transaction.

The difference in the phraseology used in the following quotation, should be particularly noticed. "And the *Lord* added to the church daily, such as should be saved." Why this marked distinction in the *language*, if it was not intended to mark some difference in the circumstances, connected with each transaction? In the first instance, they appear to be added to their number as baptized persons: and in the second, they were added to the full communion of the church. The 42nd ver. commences a new series of the history, and is an epitome of the history of the church for some months, if not for a longer period; and the actions it refers to, are related more at large, in several of the following chapters. The first thing noticed in this new series, is the stedfastness of those who had been converted on the day of pentecost, in the apostles' doctrine; the cause of it; their continuance with the apostles, to receive their repeated instructions; the privilege to which they were introduced, that of breaking bread and prayer. And "they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." It then goes on to describe the continued preaching and miracles of the

apostles, and concludes with: "And the Lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved." And were not the first converts on the day of pentecost, amongst the number added daily to the church, through their continued stedfastness in the truth? We cannot reasonably suppose, that they were brought into the full confidence and privileges of the church, without giving evidence of their stedfastness, subsequently to their baptism. The evidence of this stedfastness, must have been produced by subsequent instruction and investigation, for this was not a work to be accomplished in a day.

The same may be observed with respect to the Samaritans, to the Eunuch, to Cornelius, to Lydia, and to the Gaoler. In these cases, we have nothing from the history of their baptism, to shew that they were immediately formed into a church by it; nor that the Lord's supper was administered to them, either at the proposal of the apostles, or their own request. We have no reason to doubt, but that the apostles formed them into particular churches. This was a part of their office; but it must have been a business that followed their baptism. This required farther explanation, as to the nature of those moral principles and conduct, ne-

cessary to qualify them for the proper enjoyment of such sacred privileges.

The mission of John and Peter to Samaria, we may reasonably suppose, had this object in view, though it is not expressed in so many words. But it is said, Acts viii. 15-17: "Who, when they came down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet, he was fallen on none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus :) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. This passage is remarkably to the point; and shews plainly, that persons were by the apostles judged proper subjects for baptism, previous to their receiving the Holy Ghost. Whether this receiving of the Holy Ghost, refers to his miraculous, or sanctifying influences, does not affect the question. It is natural to infer, that he would not bestow his miraculous influences, and withhold his sanctifying influences, which was the final end of all his operations: or may it not refer to a visible descent on them, the same as was observed on the day of pentecost, and at the house of Cornelius. Be this as it may, we cannot but notice the distinction that is made between their baptism, and their subsequently receiving the

Holy Ghost. This fully proves the fact, that the first preachers of the gospel did administer baptism to those, who simply declared their belief of their message ; whether they had received the Holy Ghost at the time, or had not ; and that something more than this incipient faith, and their baptism upon it, of a moral or spiritual nature, was necessary, before they were qualified for a full admittance into the fellowship of the church. Peter was requested to tarry certain days at Cornelius's, after their baptism. This time, without doubt, was occupied in giving them further instructions, in the nature of the gospel, and its institutions, for the purpose of forming them into a christian church. The same may be said of Paul at Philippi, (as well as in every other place) in his subsequent interview with the baptized at Lydia's, before he left the city. Acts xvi. 40 : "And when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed."*

In taking a review of the foregoing account of the history of baptism, as the first and leading right of the gospel dispensation ;

* It is not improbable, the Eunuch revisited Jerusalem the first convenient opportunity, to obtain a more perfect knowledge of the gospel, than he could obtain in his transient interview with Philip.

we see, that it was the constant and uniform practice of the apostles, to unite baptism with the preaching of the gospel, and to administer it without hesitation, in connexion with the first lessons of christianity, to all who professed their faith in its doctrines, with their families, if they had any. They did not wait to learn, whether they had given any evidence of having received the Holy Ghost. They administered it, both as a sign and as a seal, for the confirmation of the truth they proclaimed, respecting Christ and the resurrection, &c. They used it as an introductory means of grace, to the baptized; to bring them under that course of instruction, which through the divine spirit, (who like the wind, bloweth where he listeth—John iii. 8,) might produce and confirm those moral and spiritual principles, and that experience and conduct, which would qualify the subject for an admittance to the full enjoyment of all the privileges of the church. That the introduction of the baptized into this visible relation to the church, lays the church and its officers, especially its ministers, under the most weighty obligation, both to Christ, and to the baptized; by instruction and example, to teach them to observe all things which Christ has commanded; whereby, those moral principles may be pro

duced, which shall entitle them to a full and confirmed enjoyment of its privileges. That the baptized are laid under obligations, to seek and to attend to those instructions, with the same design, and to pray for the influences of the Holy Spirit, to make them effectual.

We nowhere find in the history of baptism, that the apostles ever baptized any one, after a longer or shorter period of probationary profession of faith; nor on what is usually termed, a credible profession of faith; neither did they baptize any, to testify that their conversion was real, or that they had attained, as an absolute condition, certain virtues. They did not administer baptism, to give them a title to full and unlimited fellowship with the church: but as a means of grace, calculated to produce or strengthen those gracious moral principles and virtues, which through the divine blessing, would qualify the subjects, for the enjoyment of church privileges in their fullest extent.

This principle, that persons are to be admitted to a full and unlimited fellowship with the church, upon the ground of their moral character, and not of their baptism, is strenuously maintained by most, if not by all those churches who differ from us, re-

specting the subject and mode of baptism. These churches do not admit any person into a state of membership with them, on the ritual observance of baptism; but on the previous moral character, or what is by themselves termed, a credible profession of faith; or a profession to shew. This is the real principle on which they act in admitting any person, either to baptism, or church membership. This they do, because they make the claim to baptism, synonymous with that of a full admission to the privilege of unlimited fellowship with the church; if they think otherwise, they greatly deceive themselves, and those they admit to their communion. It is true, they insist upon the absolute necessity of a person being baptized, on a personal profession of his faith, and on the evidence afforded of the reality of his christianity, that he is the subject of a spiritual change of heart. They also insist upon the absolute necessity of their own particular mode of plunging the body under water, and that nothing less than this is christian baptism; and that none have any right to church privileges, who do not conform to their prescribed rules in this respect. By these means, they make it the badge of their party, the door of admittance into their own fellowship, and the wall of separation from the

fellowship of all other christian churches. Thus they produce one of the most unnatural and arbitrary divisions in the church, that ever distracted it, or that the world ever witnessed.

Thus they assume the judgment-seat of Christ, in dispensing the laws of his church, with all the infallible dictum of the pope, and the church of Rome. After all that has been said, or written, on this part of the subject ; the subjects of difference that exist between them, and those congregational churches, that hold with family baptism, are simply the following. They demand of the subject to be baptized, previous moral evidences, of what they deem a work of grace begun in the heart, agreeably to the rule of judgment they set up to try it by ; we baptize as a means of grace, for the production, or confirmation of those principles, as the case may be. They use baptism as a sign of grace received into the heart, we as a sign of grace revealed from heaven. They use baptism as a testification, that the person is already in a state of grace, or actually born again ; we, as a declaration of the necessity of divine grace to renew the heart ; that a person must be born of the spirit, as well as of water, before he can spiritually enter into the kingdom of God. They employ baptism

as an expression, that they are satisfied that the person has already obtained the remission of sins ; we employ it as the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins. They baptize, to confirm the subject in a conviction of the sincerity of his own faith ; we as a seal to the truth he is called on to believe, and to the necessity of genuine faith in that truth, for his salvation. They insist upon a total immersion, or plunging the body under water, as essential to a right performance of the ordinance ; we insist, that sprinkling, or pouring water on the subject, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is equally valid ; because, we do not believe, that one mode is essential to the exclusion of all others ; and that the essence of the ordinance, does not consist in the mode, but in the sacred names into which the person is baptized. They insist, that none have a right to the ordinance, but those who can make a personal confession of their faith, &c. which young children are incapable of doing ; we insist upon the validity of family baptism, whatever be the age of the children, if they are under the government of their parents, on the parents declaring their belief of the truth of the gospel. Which, of the two systems, comes nearest to the original design and moral ends

of the ordinance, and to the practice of the apostles ; the reader must be left to judge for himself.

In a review of the two systems, as thus contrasted, the author has not intentionally mis-represented either ; but, if in any instance he has done so through inadvertence, he is open to conviction. Taking them, as they stand, the following deductions appear to arise out of them. To make baptism the formal sign of grace received into the heart, instead of making it the sign of the grace of heaven, the confirming seal of gospel truth, and a means of instruction in that truth ; is not only to put it in the place of the grace of heaven, but to put the creature in the place of the creator. Such an application of it, is calculated to promote self-conceit and spiritual pride in the false, bold, and presumptuous professor ; on the other hand, to fill the humble seeker and follower of Christ, with hesitation and distressing fears, whether he is a real partaker of that grace in the heart, of which he is constrained to confess he is a possessor, as a qualification for the ordinance. Surely, this cannot be right, as it is putting the motive in the place of the effect. But, if it be administered only as the confirming seal of the truth, and as a means of grace designed to conduct its

subjects to the attainment of the ends proposed, by promoting a spirit of repentance and faith, then its design is at once specific and clear : it then assumes a tangible character : its appointment appears of the highest importance : the reason of its being appointed the leading rite, and one of the fundamental rites of christianity, would be clear and self-evident : its administration, or union with the preaching of the gospel, and with the first lesson of the gospel message, would be peculiarly appropriate. Upon this view of it, it appears altogether worthy of the wisdom, and of the benevolent design, of its divine author.

Before he closes this part of his subject, the author begs the liberty, respectfully to address a few suggestions to his ministerial brethren. He would ask, would it not be proper to inculcate on the minds of our hearers, the necessity of attending to the moral ends and designs of baptism, more than has frequently been done ; should this be neglected from a deference to those, who may not agree with us on the subject ? Is it scriptural, or consistent with our commission, to suffer the first and leading rite of our holy religion, to be treated with indifference, and even with scorn and contempt, and that by some who profess the gospel ?

Is it proper to suffer the leading rite of christianity, to be degraded by the appellation of a non-essential in religion? Does it comport with ministerial fidelity, to keep the moral ends of the one out of sight, as much as possible, instead of inculcating them; lest we should displease some self-important, capricious, or prejudiced person? The less we enter into the polemic discussion of it in the pulpit, the better; but, will this justify us in neglecting to inculcate its moral ends and designs? Surely not. If we were more frequently to inculcate these ends, and to embody them in our ministry, when they come fairly before us, would it not have a tendency to fix in the minds of our hearers, some definite and important ideas on the subject, to relieve their perplexities, and to lead them to think more seriously on the subject? Would it not tend to lead them to treat it with more respect: to correct partial and erroneous views: and to establish their minds, and prevent their being so easily drawn over to the opposite system? Did not the apostles treat it in this manner? Did they not refer to it, illustrate their doctrines by it, and urge its moral ends on the consciences and practice of the baptized? A word to the wise is sufficient. And I have a confidence in my

brethren, that they will weigh these considerations, and act upon them, as their better judgments shall direct.

THE MORAL DESIGNS OF BAPTISM IN RELATION TO MISSIONS.

THE apostles by uniting the ritual sign of baptism, with their verbal message, distinguished the gospel from all other systems of theology, whether jewish or heathen. They clothed their ministry with the highest authority, and stamped it with the broad seal of heaven, in the names of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. It was by these means, that they demolished the strong holds of sin and satan, tore up idolatry by the roots, and diffused the knowledge of the gospel far and wide, almost with the rapidity of lightening, to the astonishment of the world, and the confusion of its adversaries.

In taking a review of the apostles' method of uniting baptism with the first lessons of christianity, and the astonishing effects that followed their ministrations; it becomes a

question of no small importance, whether, in our missionary exertions, we are acting in conformity with the apostles' practice, who united baptism with the first lessons of christianity? It is a question of equal importance, whether we can expect that extensive success in our missions, which we so earnestly and anxiously desire, until we return to the apostolic practice in this respect; and without exception, hesitation, or delay, baptize all who profess to believe the truth of the gospel, to renounce their false religion, and who are willing to submit to the ordinance of baptism? Startling as this question at first sight may seem, from our pre-conceived modes of thinking on the subject, as well as from the manacles with which we have been fettered, by the controversies in which we have been engaged; yet, we have only to revert to the original practice, as recorded in the history of the apostles, and they will melt away, as the morning mist before the ascending sun. The first thing we should be concerned to establish, is the moral designs and ends of its appointment. If it be admitted, that its institution was intended for the two-fold purpose, of giving a confirming seal to the truth delivered, and in connexion with this, as a means of grace to introduce persons under the dispensation

of that truth it seals and confirms ; then its practice will appear, to be alone definite and appropriate, as the initiatory ordinance of christianity.

If, in the first introduction of the gospel to any place, or among any people, the apostles' baptized those who professed a belief in their doctrine, expressed a design of renouncing their false religion, and were willing to be baptized ; in order to place them under their tuition and direction, without any probationary trial, to prove the sincerity of these professions ; it then becomes a question, whether we are not bound to follow them in this practice, when placed in similar circumstances ? Nor should we presume, that we possess more wisdom than they did ; or that our prudence and caution in setting up our private judgments, to decide on men's characters, whether they are, or are not proper subjects, are superior to theirs. The consequences that might follow the baptism of some, whose conduct might afterwards prove them unworthy of the privilege, must be left to him, who has commanded us "to baptize all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever he has commanded them." By neglecting this command, we expose ourselves to a heavy censure ; and bring on ourselves a severe reproof for our

folly, in assuming a province, or right, he never committed into our hands. We may also lay it down as a principle, that we cannot expect that God will honor us, by crowning our missionary labours with that universal success, we are so anxiously desirous to obtain, unless we are concerned to honor him, by paying a due attention to his institutions. May we not entertain some fears, that our deficiency in this respect, has been one cause of the want of still greater success, than we have hitherto witnessed ?

There are two things we should always keep in view, and strictly attend to in our missionary labours. In the first place, we should direct our attention to the situation of the heathen world, and seek to draw men from their false systems of religion, by preaching the gospel to them, in connexion with every other means adapted for the accomplishment of this end ; and secondly, we should at once place them under sacred obligations, to attend to the instructions of the gospel, for the improvement of their knowledge, and for the transformation of their characters into its holy image. This can only be done by their baptism ; and in this work, the first must always take precedence of the second. This seems to have been the original design of the ordinance, and upon

this principle, the apostles evidently acted in its administration.

When we look at the South Sea Islands, or at any other missionary stations, something seems to be wanting, to give that universal success to the labours of our missionaries, which we have not yet had the happiness of witnessing; something to give a permanency to the principles of christianity, and to prevent those future consequences, which might yet disappoint our hope, and blast our brightest expectations of universal and final success.

That interesting people, the South Sea Islanders, have professedly renounced idolatry; and yet, *as a people*, they have not been brought into any special relation to the christian dispensation, by being introduced into it, as a system of divine truth; and as the only way, by which they may be taught the knowledge of salvation, for the forgiveness of their sins, and the complete and eternal salvation of their souls. In what an anomalous state, are the majority of these interesting people left! They are under no sacred tie, or moral obligation, to any system of religion whatever. Are not those among them, who have not been introduced into a visible connexion with christianity by the initiatory rite, in a more dangerous situation, in a moral point of view, than before they renounced idolatry?

Are they not in the greatest danger, of relapsing again into idolatry ; or of embracing any system of religion, that any false pretender may introduce among them ; or of becoming atheists and infidels ? Are not their children left in the same exposed situation ? This is a very serious consideration ! May not all our labours and expences yet be blasted, by some occurrent circumstance, if they are still left exposed in this unprotected state ? They have no special shield to guard them against the numerous dangers to which they are exposed ; no moral tie to hold them to the principles of the gospel, any more than any other system, that might be intruded upon them ; nor are they under any special obligation, to hold fast the form of sound words, that has been declared unto them. Would the apostles have left any people under similar circumstances, in such a situation ? Would they not at once have persuaded them to be baptized, with their children ? And thus have placed both parents and children, under the protecting shield of gospel truth ; and thus have led them under special obligations, to seek a personal interest in its blessings ? If we consult the history of their practice, we must feel fully persuaded, that they would. The very first thing the apostles did, was to persuade per-

sons under similar circumstances, to be baptized without delay. This was the very first practical lesson they taught them, in observing those things, that Christ gave his ministers, the commission to teach all nations. By these means, they established the truth upon earth, and his saving health among all nations. When we go back to the same principles, and follow up the apostolic practice, then, and not till then, may we expect to see our missionary exertions crowned with that success, which the promises of divine truth authorize us to expect.

If, on a closer examination of the subject, it should appear, that we have not been acting on the apostolic, and primitive practice of christianity, in this first and leading rite of our holy religion, particularly in our missionary exertions; then it will be necessary and proper, that we should retrace our steps, and go back to the first principles of the doctrines of Christ in this respect: Heb. v. 12. And that we should act more up to the spirit of the commission of the Saviour, and carry out our practice into the full dimensions of the length and breadth of its original design; by refusing baptism to none, who profess their sincere belief in Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, and Saviour of the world; and by admitting their families, in connexion with

the parents, to a participation of the same privilege. By this means, we shall bring both, into that relation to the dispensation of the gospel, which shall place them under those means of grace and instruction, in the way of truth and righteousness, which, through the divine blessing, may prove the power of God to their final salvation.*

These remarks are respectfully submitted, and simply suggested, to my ministerial brethren, of whatever denomination, to the directors of our different missionary societies, and to the religious public at large, as a subject for serious examination and important investigation; for the purpose of inquiring, whether we have not all been under the influence of some mistake, in reference to the subject of baptism, especially with respect to missions, in the moral uses for which it was designed? We seem to have fallen into these mistakes unwittingly, through the in-

* In letters received from the South Sea Islands, &c. it appears, that the above principles are acted upon in a partial degree; but, in the author's opinion, they are not yet fully admitted, nor acted upon, nor carried out to that extent in their application, which the commission of Christ demands, and the practice of the apostles justifies. It might not be practicable, or prudent, to make any sudden change in those stations, but to extend it gradually, as opportunity might offer, till the principle be fully established; and in new stations, to commence with it at once.

fluence of long-established custom on the one hand, and the difference of opinion existing among us, on the other : and while the author would not assume the character of a dictator, nor an alarmist, yet he does feel a deep conviction of mind, that it would betray a criminal negligence, not to give the subject a very serious and impartial re-examination. This he feels a confident hope will be the case, as is it a subject of the deepest importance in all our missionary exertions, to convert the nations of the earth to the faith of Christ.

APPENDIX.

It has been frequently asserted, that the history of the apostolic churches, gives no sanction to the practice of infant baptism. The best answer to this assertion, is contained in the following extract from the Second Letter to the Deacon of a Baptist Church, by the late Mr. C. Taylor, published 1815, from page 12—20. The following extract is given verbatim.

On whoever came to Jordan, John conferred baptism :—why not? since whoever received his rite stood pledged to repentance and holiness. On whoever desired baptism from the apostles, they bestowed it; for, how could they refuse to consecrate to Almighty God, or to their Divine Master, an applicant, from any part of Judea, at first,—from any part of the earth, in the sequel? Their practice demonstrates their principle. But, not a soul was subject to compulsion. Happily, the history of the christian church has preserved instances in proof of this proposition: for we read of several, in after ages, and when christianity was extensively promulgated, who were baptized in adult years: these we consider as being much in the same situation, as those children who were left at home, when their parents

travelled to the Jordan to John: or of those children who, in the wilderness, under Moses, did not receive circumcision, because the perils of time and place forbad the safe performance of the rite. These were afterwards circumcised in adult years, from the necessity of the case, though in strict compliance with the Divine law, they ought to have been circumcised on the eighth day after their birth. Now we most cheerfully quote, and support, these instances of adult baptism, recorded in church history; because they demonstrate, that christian parents “were not under bondage,”—Divine benevolence “preferred mercy to sacrifice.” But then, be it remembered also, that that same church history unequivocally proves the baptism of little ones to be a christian practice: and we accept its testimony on *this*, with equal confidence.

Late in the second century, and within a hundred and fifty years after the churches were planted by the apostles, Tertullian wrote against infant baptism. Now, he could not have wrote against a custom, which custom did not exist; nor indeed, unless it prevailed. His reasons are sophisticated by “the spirit of bondage” of the ancient law: they are marked by that disposition to dread and despair, which characterized the Mosaic dispensation:—He argues—“Give to them who *ask* thee,—but CHILDREN cannot *ask*: Do not forbid them to *come*: therefore, let them stay till they can *come*: let them *come* when they are grown up—when they understand—when

they are instructed whither it is they are about to come: let them be made christians when they can know Christ." [You best know, Sir, whether these arguments are retained, and to what effect, in the present day.] "For reasons equally valid, UNMARRIED PERSONS ought to be *kept off* from baptism, who are likely to be visited by temptation,—as well as those who never were married (ought to be *kept off*) on account of their coming to maturity, as those in a widowed state, by reason of the miss of their conjugal partners." Add, the thousand reasons which deter persons engaged in the multifarious concerns of life, in middle age,—add, the inevitable infirmities and weaknesses, mental and bodily, of old age—and baptism is postponed till doomsday. A hopeful method, truly, of establishing the church of Christ!

But, after all, Tertullian had a shorter way of confounding the popular practice, could he have availed himself of it: he omits the STRONGEST ARGUMENT that possibly could be employed against the object of his aversion, had truth allowed him to use it: the very battering-ram of destruction against infant baptism, could he but have wielded it. *E. gr.*—"This practice is a NOVELTY: it dates but of yesterday: it was UNKNOWN to christians fifty years ago: it was UNKNOWN to the first churches: it was UNKNOWN to the apostles." He *would* willingly have said this, for this must have condemned the practice conclusively; not another word was

necessary : but he COULD not. He must twist a few texts, or so, out of their perpendicular, in support of his principles : or he might go so far as to hazard a slight fib ; but on a downright falsity the christian father would not venture ; although intent on suppressing infant baptism itself.

I know not which speaks most loudly, the SILENCE of Tertullian, notwithstanding what he would have said, or the *affirmation* of his contemporary Origen, who, in express terms, ascribes the practice of infant baptism to the apostles. But we ought to remember, that Origen had many advantages, not then common : that he was of christian descent ; that his father was a christian martyr ; that his grandfather, and great grandfather, were christians also. Could a family so early christianized, be ignorant what had been the primitive rites and customs of the apostles, and the apostolic churches ? A moment's reflection answers this question. Origen's words are, "*For this also it was, that the church received from the apostles, the INJUNCTION (or tradition) to GIVE BAPTISM even TO INFANTS.*" And in another place, "According to that saying of our Lord concerning infants,—(*and thou wast an INFANT when thou wast baptized*)—their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven." True it is, and I exceedingly regret it, that we have these explicit passages in a translation and abridgement of Origen's works, from greek into latin. Had the original at large

come down to us, I feel persuaded, that we should have found the sentiment stated more fully—more explicitly it cannot be—and perhaps, justified by instances. But this I am sure of,—that if the testimony of Origen had stood OPPOSED to infant baptism, we should never have heard one word on the disadvantage of having his work in a translation only, or any imputation on the competence or correctness of his translator, Rufinus, from those who now censure him.

It remains that we justify the practice of the primitive churches, by observing, that whatever opinions might obtain in different places, or whatever difference in administration, no instance of reproof from the apostles is recorded. Happily for us, though unhappily for themselves, the Corinthian church transgressed in the administration of the Lord's supper ; by the admonition addressed to them on that occasion, succeeding ages are taught, to the distance of thousands of years ;—it were but a dubious specimen of christian charity to regret, that some occasion of reproof on the subject of baptism did not occur among the churches, by which we also might have been instructed ; but from this silence it is clear, that *this* sacrament had not, in the days of the apostles, been misunderstood, or misapplied.

The churches, says Origen, acted upon *tradition* : now, what is the meaning of the word *tradition*, in the apostolic writings, and those of

the early fathers? We, in the present day, are accustomed to fix to it the notion of a mere rumour unsupported by documents, and therefore, liable to perversion;—but this is directly contrary to the import of the word among the first christians. The apostle writing to the Thessalonians, exhorts them to “hold the *traditions* they had been taught, whether by word, or *by our epistle*.” He makes no difference between what he had written, and what his authorized agents reported in his name; and he called his own epistles, *traditions*. The first epistle to the Corinthians, is a collection of *traditions*; for it was delivered to the church at Corinth, by Stephanus, and Fortunatus, and Achaicus, in the name of Paul. It is a series of instructions communicated by second hands; it is composed of *written traditions*, as it stands; and supposing, which is very likely, that Paul added *verbal instructions*, also, on some points, to Stephanus and his brethren, these became *unwritten traditions*, when they were reported by those christians to their constituents, the Corinthian church. And this—“instruction”—is the true meaning of the word:—it is rendered *precepta*—*traditiones*, in Latin: in English, *directions*, [*Instructions*, Doddridge. *Injunctions*, Parkhurst.] *Ordinances*, in our public version—*traditions*,—“*tradition, which ye received of us*.” So then, the apostle calls his own teachings, *traditions*; that is to say, *instructions, directions, injunctions, or ordinances*. It is clear, that Origen uses the

word in the same sense. "The church," says he, "received from the apostles, the *tradition—injunction—direction—instruction, or—ordinance*, to give baptism even to infants." This is very credible in itself, on the authority of the relator; but, it becomes much clearer, if not stronger, by a closer examination of the facts of the case.

It is certain from their own testimony, that the apostles took care to establish means of conveying their *directions or injunctions*—to succeeding generations; for such, clearly, is the import of the apostle Peter's language, "I will endeavour, that after my decease, ye may each of you make mention of these things;"—and thereby perpetuate the remembrance of them. This is perfectly coincident with Paul's directions to Timothy, "The things which thou hast heard from me (*δια*) *for the purpose of instructing* many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." And if the apostles, on their part, were so careful, there can be no doubt, but the primitive christians, their successors, were, on their part also, equally anxious to be informed respecting whatever accounts of the conduct of Christ, and of his apostles, were in preservation among them. So Irenæus (born A. D. 97) describes his anxiety to acquire information from his master Polycarp: "*I remember his discourse to the people concerning the conversations he had had with John (the apostle), and others who had seen our Lord; how he rehearsed*

their discourses, and what he heard them who were eye-witnesses of the word of life, say of our Lord, and of his miracles and doctrines:"—Now, this proves that Polycarp had diligently enquired from those who could tell him, concerning our Lord and his doctrine; he had made himself master of whatever was to be known; it proves also, that such *traditions were repeated by him in his public discourses to the people*: it was, indeed, the best of all possible modes of instruction:—moreover, the fact shews, that these discourses had made the deepest impression on the memory of Irenæus; and that he did not forget them to his dying day. In this, assuredly, he was not singular; thousands of other hearers, equally desirous to know, were equally attentive, and equally affected. Here it is to our purpose to recollect, that the same desire animated Origen, afterwards; that for the purpose of acquiring such knowledge, he visited the churches planted by the apostles: in *Cappadocia*, and *Arabia*, in *Greece* and *Rome*, while the main part of his life was spent in *Syria* and *Palestine*, the seat of the first churches; where he could not fail of acquiring an intimate acquaintance with their constitution, manners, and practice. [He himself was a native of Alexandria in Egypt.]

Let us reduce this to a tangible form. It appears from history, that Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of John the apostle, lived long, and might bear his testimony to the truth seventy or eighty years after the death of John;

—but to avoid cavil, I take the generations in the family of Origen, and of those “faithful men,” to whom Timothy gave charge, at *forty years* only ; and because Origen’s father was martyred, I take him for *twenty-five years* only. It appears then, that the testimony of Paul, of Timothy, of Timothy’s “faithful men,” and of “others also,” instructed by them, reaches downwards to the year 180 : Origen was born in 185 ; add his father, *twenty-five years* ; his grandfather, *forty years* ; and his great grandfather, *forty years* also ; we are brought (ascending) to the year 80, when Mark the evangelist, had been dead only *twelve years* at Alexandria. Certainly Mark knew the practice of the apostles : he, too, would select his “faithful men” to transmit his instructions to his church in subsequent years : St. John was still living—for twenty years—in case any difficulty had arisen ; and the intercourse by sea from Ephesus to Alexandria was direct : but from Alexandria to Crete, the intercourse was almost daily ; and here was Timothy, or Titus, or some other of their “faithful men,” living contemporaries with the Origen family for nearly *a hundred years* ! Is it possible, that under such circumstances, the practice of the church, derived from the apostles, in a matter of daily occurrence, could be forgot?—Could it be perverted, abused, counteracted ? Could a rite totally new, unfounded, diametrically opposite to apostolic injunctions, be established, and prevail ? Where was Timothy ? where were his

“faithful men?” Not at their posts; not at their duty; if such abominable transgression, could be suffered, and not only be suffered but be announced and acted on, as derived from the apostles themselves! What is this short of impossible?

On the other hand, what is it short of impossible to imagine that Origen had been imposed upon—he who travelled for the express purpose of acquiring information, who visited the apostolic churches, and resided among the chief of them. What is it short of impossible, that he should not know the christian observances in his own family, from his father, his grandfather, &c. derived from Mark the evangelist? In short, Sir, were this a question on a fact of English history, said to occur a hundred, a hundred and twenty, or a hundred and fifty years ago, would you, or would you not, deem the evidence sufficient, and attach a credit to it, on which to establish your belief?

Such is the testimony of Origen in reference to injunctions for infant baptism, derived from the apostles: let us now direct our inquiries to the records of the apostles’ actions, and see how far their practice agreed with their injunctions, and with the report of it as transmitted by Origen.

TABLE OF CONTEMPORARIES,

SHEWING THE DESCENT OF THE ORIGEN FAMILY.

A. D.		A. D.	
	JOHN, <i>Apost.</i>	PAUL, 67.	MARK, <i>Evan.</i> 63
			Origen's great grand-father 80
96	Polycarp, dis- ciple of John.		
97	Irenæus, born.	TIMOTHY, 97.	
101	JOHN, dies.		100
116	Polycarp, bi- shop of Smyr- na (Rev.ii.8.)		Origen's grand father 120
		<i>Faithful men</i> , 140. (2 Tim. ii. 2.)	Origen's father 160
170	Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, disci- ple of Polycarp, mentions " <i>re- born infants.</i> "		
		<i>Others also</i> , 180. (2 Tim. ii. 2.)	ORIGEN born 185 Origen's father martyred 202

There can be no doubt, but what many apostolic persons were living in Egypt, which had a daily intercourse with Judea;—that many of the jewish christians, after the destruction of Jerusalem, &c. would settle among their countrymen at Alexandria; and that from these, as well as from other christians, in foreign (greek) churches, Origen would obtain correct information respecting all christian rites, occasional or constant. But, this Table shews only such contemporaries with his family, as we know from indisputable authority.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY J. C. KELLY & SON,

32, HOUNDSDITCH.



Aug 1



